

**VERA MOUTAFCHIEVA
NIKOLAI TODOROV**

BULGARIA'S PAST



SOFIA-PRESS

Those sections dealing with the history of Bulgaria in the Middle Ages and in the period of Ottoman rule were written by VERA MOU-TAFCHIEVA, and those regarding modern and contemporary history by Prof. NIKOLAI TODO-ROV

Translated by
GEORGINA YATES

9415 Б

Artist:
Dimiter Kartalev

VERA MOUTAFCHIEVA * Prof. NIKOLAI TODOROV

BULGARIA'S PAST



SOFIA-PRESS, 1969



CONTENTS

Pre-Bulgaria	11
The Beginning	18
Early Summits	24
Greatness and Decline	29
The First Bondage	33
The Revival	37
The Second Rise	42
The Peasant Tsar	47
In the Glow of the Sunset	51
The Very Prolonged Fall of Bulgaria under Ottoman Rule	59
Early Bondage and Early Uprisings	67
A People Arises from the Ashes	81
The National Revival and the Campaign for Education	88
The Great Ferment	95
Revolution and Liberation	108
A State Reborn Makes Its Way	117
The Wars	126
The Last Struggle	140
A First Balance-Sheet	157



If destiny is ever mentioned in history, that destiny is conditioned by the place which a people inhabit, their place under the sun. Bulgaria's place is here in the Balkans, and much that has happened in her history is due to this location.

Her place on earth is on the shores of a closed sea. That is why the Bulgarians never became seafarers, merchants or colonizers. It stands at the Gateway of the Peoples — the steppe between the Urals and the Caspian, from whence countless barbarians surged forth. That is why Bulgaria's history consists of high tides and low tides, of periods when the country flourished, and periods of ruin. It stands on land which has been a crossroads between East and West for thousands and thousands of years. That is not the kind of a place a people should choose for their habitat if they care for their peaceful development. A perpetual ferment — that was the daily life of the Balkans.

There is no evil in history without good. Bulgarians have found it difficult to defend their place under the sun, but it was worth their while — something besides hardships awaited them here. You will rarely find such a great variety of Nature's beauties gathered in such a small country. This is due to the variety of its contours, which change every hour as one travels over it; to the climate which varies from that of a steppe, to a subtropical or an Alpine climate. To its springs, which vary

from ice cold to thermal springs. To its fruits, for it is no accident that Bulgaria's name was spread far and wide by her fruits.

But it is not only the variety, the great fertility which created the milieu in which the Bulgarian people came into being and developed historically. Other features of this milieu also influenced them, to mention only two: the Balkan Range and the Road. It is their parallel presence which has affected the entire history of the Bulgarian land, and even the Bulgarian character.

The Balkan Range seems endless. It begins in the Western part of Bulgaria to end in a perpendicular cape jutting out into the sea, as if it was a hard and strong backbone for this land. It has helped the Bulgarians never completely to give in to anyone, and has always been the stronghold of Bulgarian freedom. While the fertile lowlands fell victim to the incursions of barbarians, or foreign oppressors who settled down in them for centuries, the insubmissive, the irreconcilable Bulgarians have always lived in the Balkan Range. This mountain range, really big and rich, has left a deep imprint on the entire development of the Bulgarian people.

So has the Road. It has had many names: Trajan's way, the War Road, the Diagonal Road. But most often it is called the Old Road. Not from Trajan's time, for it goes back to prehistoric times, when it connected different tribes; while at the dawn of Roman domination in the Balkans, it became what it is today: the most direct land route between East and West. One of its points — the watershed between the Black Sea and the Aegean — has been considered the frontier between Thrace and Illyria since Antiquity. Later it divided the provinces—Roman, Byzantine, Bulgarian or Turkish; it has been indicated as the boundary between Christianity and heresy. Good and evil passed through the Bulgarian land along the Old Road, bar-

barity or civilization travelled over it, crusaders, merchants, scholars and adventurers once strode along it. The restless waves of mankind in ferment poured along the Old Road. And there, along that long and narrow strip of land, the Bulgarians more than once came face to face with all the problems and the phenomena of their time, brought to them by the travellers. Even from time immemorial this land has not lived out of the world; the Old Road has placed it in touch with distant lands and peoples.

A bustling crossroads — that's Bulgaria. Here not only conquerors have clashed; two spheres of civilization of the Ancient World bordered on each other, cultural influences met and various world views clashed here. The destiny of this land was one of turbulence, influencing its development and the character of its people, which is at the same time firm and receptive, stubborn and supple, pugnacious and unbiassed. A people had to possess very many qualities to remain masters of this great crossroads.

Today Bulgaria is one of the small countries on the continent, one of those, moreover, who set out along the road of her free national development among the very last. A long series of historical vicissitudes, and a total of seven centuries of bondage (seven out of thirteen) were unable to cast a shadow on the history of Bulgaria's greatness as a state, and on the brilliance of Bulgaria's culture in the Middle Ages, nor on the courageous struggles of the Bulgarian people in modern times.



PRE—BULGARIA

Bulgaria has existed for the past 1300 years. But her land has a far longer life. The first traces of man here date back to the middle of the Palaeolithic Age, a quite distant age, separated from the dawn of mankind only by the Early Palaeolithic Age. In short, the land of Bulgaria is one of the places where living matter assumed man's form. Here primitive man passed through all the dangers which attended primitive mankind in its initial phases, to reach the threshold of history — written signs.

According to the first written data, Thracians were already settled here in the eighth century B. C. If we want to have an idea of that century, it is enough to know that at that time the entire population of our planet numbered some one hundred million, that Egypt was entering upon its late period, that Assyria and Babylon were fighting for the domination of Hither Asia, that the Etruscans had appeared in Italy, that Homer was creating the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and that mention was first made in his works of bread as a food, therefore bread had already been discovered.

At that time, the Thracians were already living in the Bulgarian lands. No one knows whether they were indigenous inhabitants or settlers. They were the first who began to draw out of this land everything that it had to offer, and the fame of Thracian wine, Thracian wheat, sheep and horses spread to Hellas at once, while Homer called Thrace itself 'the fertile'. This fame was to cost the land between the Danube and the Aegean dear.

While the Thracians were hard at work, mastering the technique of bronze and iron, Greek seafarers appeared along the Black Sea coast, and Hellas founded her colonies on those shores. The foundations of almost all the Bulgarian towns and villages on the Black Sea were laid by the Greeks. Sculptured cornices and bases are literally built into the houses of Bulgarian fishermen on the shore, while their gates are supported by the pillars of ancient temples. The Greeks laid the second sphere of occupation in Bulgaria, but because it was made of hewn white stones, it weathered all the storms.

A brisk trade began between the Greek ports and the Thracian Hinterland. The first important reciprocal influence between the two great cultures, the Greek and the Thracian, began. All the objects that have survived from this period are a valuable contribution to the cultural history of mankind. Take the Thracian tombs, for instance, in all the beauty of their paintings and decorative art, with all the vast variety of their burial furnishings, which are unique for their time. Thracian singers were welcomed all over Hellas, because Thrace was the cradle of music, of singing. Hellas, for her part, lauded the Thracian

feasts — for Antique Europe Thrace became the symbol of a rich and merry life, with much wine, song and fruit, with an extravagant art which even gilded the axles of their chariots and the bridles of the famous Thracian horses.

However, the life of the Thracians was certainly not so cloudless. Conquerors such as Darius I and Xerxes, coming from distant Persia, passed through their lands to fight against the distant Scythians or the Greeks. This contact was too brief to leave important traces, but sufficient to destroy the cities along the coast. They recovered later, almost at the same time that the Thracians began to form their own kingdoms.

The first and most powerful of them was the Kingdom of the Odrysae which appeared in the early years of the fifth century B. C. It rapidly extended its territory from the Sea of Marmara to the Danube, and bore all the features of a transition from a tribal union to an early state formation. Its outstanding rulers—Teres, Sitalces and Seuthes — alternated between war with the Greek states, and the signing of treaties with some of them. But the supremacy of the Odrysaean rulers in the life of the Peninsula was transient: the Kingdom of the Odrysae declined, undermined by the surviving traditions of the tribal system.

The zenith of Thracian culture was reached in the fifth to the fourth century B. C. The Thracians built cities and mapped out roads. Mapped out is the right word: along a given line, which passed over plains, hills or mountains, without bends, the Thracians erected mounds of the same kind. They are still to be

found all over Bulgaria, more resistant to time than even the best built roads.

New conquerors — this time the Macedonians (a general name for a conglomeration of Greek and Illyrian tribes), headed by Philipppo II — destroyed the kingdom of Sitalces and Seuthes. Greek types of cities sprang up in the plain to the south of the Haemus (the Balkan Range), no longer only along the shores of Thrace. One of them was Philippopolis, today Plovdiv. But even this rule was brief: Philipppo's son, Alexander, absorbed in distant conquests, cut the roots of his power in Thrace himself. The Thracians rebelled against the new-comers and there was an interregnum in their land. A new people, coming most unexpectedly from the North-west — the Celts — availed themselves of this interregnum.

Thus on the territories, which we shall later call Bulgarian, a new state lived for a moment in history — the Celtic state. It was barely able to maintain itself for sixty years, because the Thracians rebelled against it and swept it away. The Celts returned whence they had come, and the Thracians restored their own Kingdom of the Odrysae.

It was now the third century B. C. In five centuries of history the land south of the Danube had seen Thracians, Greeks, Persians, Macedonians and Celts. That incessant restless movement, which was to be a permanence in these lands, was already in full swing. Or perhaps not? For in that same century the star of Rome rose in Italy, and a new unique state power came into being which was to try to embrace and keep in the calm of bondage the entire Antique world.

Rome set foot in the Balkan Peninsula in the second century B. C., but the long years of her expeditions into the interior did not bear fruit for a very long time. After endless wars and rebellions, by bribing or killing, or forming alliances with the Thracian kings, the Romans finally conquered Thrace only in the middle of the first century A. D.; it took them two hundred years to subject the indigenous people of these territories.

Roman rule proved to be like a cruel and heavy roller which passed over the Peninsula; it did not recognize a single local person as its citizen. Roman officials and governors, and Roman troops were its main supports. From a free people the Thracians became the slaves of a foreign power. Moreover, Rome never seemed to have enough slaves, because Rome was busy building as she had never built before. It determined the southern bank of the Danube as its military frontier, its *limes*, and built a string of city forts along it. The picture of a city of this kind, as it emerges before us from the soil, looks improbable to us — we realize that Rome did, indeed, intend to stay here to the end of time. All the streets and squares were paved with hewn stones, there were amphitheatres, *thermae*, temples and forums in them all, for even at several months' journey from Rome a Roman soldier had to live with all the refinements of Roman life. Rich villas with stables and dwellings for slaves were scattered over the hills around the towns. They were ornamented with mosaics and reliefs, there was water for their fountains; at such great distances from Rome, a Roman governor or official had to prove by his entire way of life that he represented a great country.

And roads. How uncertain this great country nevertheless fell there, to criss-cross the Peninsula with military roads, so that Rome might appear in a matter of days wherever it might occur to anyone to dispute her rule. Above the thick phases of Thracian and Hellenistic culture, a new stratum was now laid with crushing force — the Roman phase. Rome had declared her *Pax Romana*.

This was rather presumptuous, even for all-powerful Rome. There was no peace in the Balkans. There was incessant pressure from the barbarians on their northern frontier, and the Thracians in bondage were for ever rebelling, until the inevitable interaction between barbarians and slaves had turned this territory into a no man's land; simply a plain in which for centuries the barbaric society, the irrepressible tribes seethed in perpetual turmoil. But before that stage was reached, a Thracian, the slave and escaped gladiator Spartacus, headed the greatest slave rebellion in Antiquity, and showed Rome in the city of Rome that Thrace, the land of wine and music, would fight the *Pax Romana* to the end.

The Balkans suffered the invasions of barbarians from the time when they first appeared right up to the fifteenth century — more than two thousand years. But the phenomenon known to history as the 'Invasion of Barbarians' began here in the second century A. D. Goths, Huns, Avars, all stayed for a longer or a shorter time, or passed through, often to return, and withdraw again. No one was able to retain a hold on this land, which stretched out with all its wealth opposite the Gateway of the Peoples.

Amid the whirlwind of barbarity, on the threshold

of historical changes, an event occurred in 330 that formed the Balkans as Balkans: A Roman Emperor moved his capital to the Bosphorus, to Byzantium, giving the city his own name, Constantinople. A little later the city became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, to which history was to give the city's name, Byzantium. The key to the East-West road, the centre that drew all conquerors, the heir of Antiquity throughout the Middle Ages, Constantinople remained the City of Cities for many a century, and proximity to it determined the destiny of a number of peoples. Constantinople meant civilization, while all Europe fell prey to the barbarians.

Barbarians and barbarians. They swept Rome away, formed tribal unions, destroyed them, warred with one another or with Byzantium, destroyed culture after culture, and left a slight layer of primitive pottery over the white stone villas which they had torn down. In the early years of the sixth century the Slavs are also mentioned among these barbarians. Some of the many, Byzantium thought, and succeeded in setting them against the Avars, reassuring its anxiety. But the Empire underestimated them, just as Rome had underestimated the Thracians. And two of the three elements of a people as yet unborn, should not have been underestimated, for that same Empire, the great bridge between East and West, between Antiquity and the Middle Ages, still had much to suffer from them.

THE BEGINNING

It soon became evident that the Slavs had no intention of moving on. Their attacks on the Peninsula grew so frequent that they finally merged into an uninterrupted presence. The Empire hid itself behind the *Long Wall*, which rose forty kilometres from the capital. That is to say, it recognized that it had lost its domination over its possessions in the Peninsula.

The Slavs settled there rapidly, and turned the Byzantine fortresses into islands amid a sea of barbarians. In a short time the Slavs became skilful warriors. Their flotillas carried them through the Aegean Archipelago right down to Crete, and their foot besieged cities such as Salonika and used battering rams to break down its walls.

The Empire observed with bitterness the 'Slavization' of its wonderful Peninsula. It put iron and gold into play, and succeeded better with the latter. The Slavs were not yet sufficiently mature to form a state, they lived in tribes and tribal unions whose chieftains were too numerous to reason as one man. Gradually, as they settled down, the Empire tried to

bring the Slavs under its rule, and to make them its subjects or at least its *foederati*, subjected to them.

There is, indeed, no if in history, but let us indulge in supposition: if history had left the Empire time enough, as a far more advanced country which included the Southern Slavs within its boundaries, it could have assimilated them, and turned them into Greeks. (This did happen with those of the Slavs who had settled in Thessaly or the islands.) But something hindered its aspiration: the appearance of Bulgaria.

A people of horsemen and warriors from the steppes inhabited the Northern Caucasus up to the fourth century A. D. Then the Huns swept them to the West, and then the Proto-Bulgarians invaded the Byzantine possessions many times, and at last the Emperor Anastasius quickly built the *Long Wall* against them. Conquered by the Avars for a short time, and for an even shorter time by the Turkic tribes, they tore themselves away and at the end of the sixth century founded their own Khanate between the Sea of Azov and Kuban.

This 'Great Bulgaria' shone forth for a short time. Under the pressure of the Khazars, the Proto-Bulgarian people set out in various directions. Part of them formed 'Volgan Bulgaria', where the River Kama flows into the Volga. Another part went far to the West, to settle in Northern Italy or Pannonia, where they did not create their own state. A third part — this part was led by the Khan's third son, Asparouh — reached the delta of the Danube and built a spacious stronghold of his own, with earthworks. The Proto-Bulgarians thereby showed that they intended to stay there.

No one knows exactly how a treaty was signed between these Proto-Bulgarians and the Slav tribal union which inhabited the plain between the Balkan Range and the Danube, but a new kingdom, headed by Asparouh, appeared as the fruit of this treaty — Bulgaria. United by a common threat — from Byzantium — the two peoples began to defend the lands they had occupied. A big Byzantine fleet, which was to land soldiers below Asparouh's stronghold and to hurl the Proto-Bulgarians back into the steppes, suffered defeat, and in 681 the Empire was forced to sign peace with the Bulgarians. But peace is signed between one state and another. Byzantium thus recognized the new phenomenon as a state.

In general lines, the seventh century appeared as follows: The Western Roman Empire was already in ruins, and a number of barbarian countries had sprung up on its former territories; they still bore signs of tribalism — of the Visigoths, the Vandals, the Jutes, the Saxons, the Angles, the Burgundians and the Franks. All these peoples had invaded these territories before the Slavs and had settled in them, but many of the states they founded up to the seventh century did not last. At that time there was not yet a single Slav state. The first one was the Bulgarian state. It was also the first barbarian state to appear on the lands of the Eastern Roman Empire. There would have been only the slightest possibility of its surviving here, where countless nomads had passed and gone on up to the seventh century, and where more were to appear.

But this was not all: the barbarians, who were still in ferment, were the principal threat to the young

Bulgarian state; on the South and the East it bordered on the former owner of the Bulgarian lands, the most powerful Empire of that day, the Byzantine Empire. Not for a moment in all the common existence of these two states (and it lasted for seven centuries) did the Byzantine Empire resign itself to the presence of its northern rival. It was to be an endless struggle in which peace was actually to be only a truce, which passed from Byzantine to Bulgarian territory, ruining and ravaging everything on its way. More than once the fate of the existence of Bulgaria or of Byzantium hung in the balance.

There was nothing extraordinary in the fact that the Bulgarians suffered defeats in their centuries of struggle against Byzantium; after all, they were faced by an Empire in all the majesty of its overseas possession. It is not so easy to explain why the Byzantine Empire should have suffered many defeats at the hands of the Bulgarians at a time when their state was neither settled nor consolidated.

The mere fact that a state appeared in the Peninsula, so recently Slavicized, the main mass of which were Slavs, was already a sufficient danger for the Empire. The Southern Slavs who were still her subjects inevitably gravitated towards Bulgaria, they were favourable soil for the conquering campaigns of the Bulgarian khans, they accepted their inclusion in Bulgaria as a liberation from bondage, while the Empire never succeeded in consolidating any of its reconquered Bulgarian territories, because it met with the stubborn resistance of the local population.

One hundred and fifty years passed thus in supreme tension for the new state. In that time it not only de-

fended its first conquests, but also greatly extended its frontiers. In the reign of Khan Kroum (803-814) it set foot on the Old Way by capturing Serdica (which was later to be called Sredets and finally Sofia). The Empire could not permit itself to lose control over the most important land route of the Middle Ages, and exerted all its efforts in a tremendous campaign which was to rid it of its rival forever. Having crossed the Balkan Range, the Byzantines destroyed Pliska, the first Bulgarian capital, and ravaged the Bulgarian lands. But on the way back they were ambushed by Kroum's army in which, as contemporaries maintain, even women took part. In one of the passes of the Balkan Range the Byzantines were slain almost to the last man. Their Emperor perished there, too.

The supremacy of Bulgaria in the South-east began with this great victory, a supremacy which was to be preserved for centuries, despite various vicissitudes in its fortunes of war. In the early ninth century her frontiers included territory from the North Carpathians to the Rhodopes, and from the river Tisza to the River Dniester. The Bulgarian warriors reached the walls of Constantinople. Kroum also created the laws of the new kingdom. His son Omourtag (816-831) established its administrative structure. In his reign a great deal of building was done in Bulgaria, and many of the buildings erected at that time remained unsurpassed in Slav lands. The rapid expansion of Bulgaria to the Southern and Western regions of the Peninsula continued after Omourtag. From a barbarous kingdom she grew into a leading political power.

It was now the ninth century — a period of great

changes. The Normans pressed forward from the North, and the Arabs from the South. Rurik had already formed the Novgorod Principality; the French Empire of Charlemagne (with which from Kroum's reign the Bulgarians had had a common frontier) was divided between Ludovic of Germany, Lothar I and Charles II; Angles and Saxons were fighting against the Norman Conquest; there were disagreements between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople, which were to lead to an irreconcilable rupture. Christianity, introduced in the fourth century, had succeeded in the course of five centuries in imposing itself in a number of countries which had sprung up on the ruins of the Roman Empire. It provided forms for the relationships between the states and for their cultural life. A pagan state, no matter how powerful it might be, stood outside the civilization of that day in the ninth century.

If Bulgaria wished to obtain recognition of her real achievements and her actual place among her peers, she would have to conform to Christianity as a form, a norm and a culture.

EARLY SUMMITS

Of course, there was more than one reason for Bulgaria's adoption of Christianity. For three centuries Bulgarian society had moved from the tribal to the early forms of the feudal system. Paganism, the faith of primitive societies, could not be the ideology of a feudal state. The ruler himself and his boyars needed the dogma of monotheism on which to base his autocracy on earth.

There was something more, too: so far, up to the ninth century, Bulgaria had consisted of two nationalities — the Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians. Both were pagan, but they had their own individual and numerous deities. To merge them completely into one nation, it was first of all necessary for the Proto-Bulgarians and the Slavs to receive the same faith.

The reasons were on hand, the pretext was to be found. It appeared in 865, when military defeats and a great drought brought disaster to the country. To sign peace with honour, Khan Boris adopted Christianity from the Empire, the name of Mihaïl and the title '*Knyaz* (Prince) of the Bulgarians'.

Quite casually, contemporaries write that Boris did this 'at night and in secret', that he was followed in accepting the new faith by only a few devoted boyars. It is quite clear: the ruler of the Bulgarians feared the reaction of the Proto-Bulgarian *boili*, his powerful nobles; he feared the restraining force of the traditions, and possibly his people, too.

He had good grounds for his fears. As soon as priests set out through Bulgaria to spread Christianity among the people, dissatisfied *boili* of the ten provinces of the country rose in rebellion — not without the support of the people — and appeared at the capital. In a real battle Boris won the victory, executed fifty of his foremost nobles because of the part they had played in the rebellion, and imposed Christianity on his entire country.

The tremendous consequences of his action were soon apparent. Bulgaria took part on an equal footing in all negotiations between countries: her representatives appeared at Church Councils and decided political or cultural questions together with the rest of the Christian world. But the advantages of the new situation of Bulgaria, until yesterday a barbarous country, were connected with a new danger. While paganism had set her outside the Byzantine cultural sphere, and was an obstacle to Greek influence over Slavs and Proto-Bulgarians, Christianity provided a bridge for that influence. The Byzantine Empire, the most civilized and developed state in the Middle Ages, could easily draw into her orbit a young people who had no established traditions, no script or literature of their own.

Boris, who was a great statesman, perceived this

danger and decided to resist it by linking the Bulgarian Church not with Constantinople, but with Rome, which was farther away. The diplomatic game, played by Boris, continued for years, and caused a complete rupture between the two halves of Christianity, so vital was the question of their political hegemony over Bulgaria both for Rome and for Constantinople.

Actually, Boris did not care to subject his church either to Rome or to Constantinople, quite the contrary. He insisted on one thing, to both Patriarch and Pope: to be given an independent church. Quite naturally, they insisted on precisely the opposite, the Bulgarian Church must be under the one or the other. In the final count it was Constantinople which obtained supremacy over it, but the Greek Church was forced to allow its autonomy. The efforts of Boris were crowned with success.

This success was rather formal. Since Byzantine literature spread far and wide throughout Bulgaria, since Bulgarian boyars and clerics received their education in the Greek language, no autonomy could bar the road to the political influence of the Empire. And this is where Knyaz Boris rendered his country an immeasurably great historical service: he introduced the Slav script into Bulgaria.

This script was evolved by the brothers Cyril and Methodius, who were born in Salonika. On the orders of the Byzantine Emperor, they evolved a Slav alphabet, the Glagolitic alphabet. They did not evolve it with a view to Bulgarian interests. The Prince of Great Moravia, threatened by the growing influence of the German clergy in his country (just as Boris had been^m by the Byzantine Empire), had turned to the

Emperor in Constantinople (just as Boris had turned to the Pope of Rome), to ask for priests and an alphabet. The Byzantine Empire, shrewd as ever, had realized that it could ward off the German influence in Great Moravia by Slav letters and books, and impose its own. The Empire would hardly have done Boris such a service, for their interests here were in opposition to his.

Cyril and Methodius went to Great Moravia and endured such sufferings at the hands of the Germans or their tools that they died one after the other, leaving an unfinished work to their disciples. Slav letters did not strike root in Moravia, where they were effaced, and those who had brought them were driven out of the country. Travelling down the Danube they reached Belgrade, at that time the Western-most stronghold of Bulgaria, where they were given a wonderful welcome and taken straight to the capital, Preslav.

At last Boris held a big trump in his hands in his struggle against Byzantine influence: an alphabet and several books. And several apostles of a work as yet unknown, the first teachers of the Slavs. Boris offered them all the conditions they needed to develop their work. First of all they trained many men, the future Bulgarian priesthood. At a feverish rate they began to translate and copy the liturgical books that were needed, so that in every Bulgarian church the people could hear their own tongue, so that every Bulgarian could learn to read and write Bulgarian.

Boris, the statesman, was clearly aware of Bulgaria's role at that exceptional moment in history: Bulgaria was called upon to defend the right of all Slavdom, its right to national independence, to its

own cultural development. The attempts of Rome, of the German or the Byzantine Empires to bring the Slav countries under their hegemony, to implant in them their own political influence, were to be frustrated by a complete and authoritative Slav literature, the equal of any other. This literature developed and flourished precisely in Bulgaria. It was the Bulgarian language which became for many centuries the common language of Slav scholarship. The unfinished work of Cyril and Methodius found its completion in Bulgaria, and became her cultural policy. It was not by chance that Boris sent Clement, the first disciple of the two brothers, to the most Westerly regions of his country, what is today Macedonia and Northern Albania, to draw to the cause of Slav culture the independent population that inhabited them. Only ten years later there was not a single Greek priest preaching in Bulgaria, and Bulgarian was heard in the church services of the remotest villages.

This was in the second half of the ninth century. At that time no sermons were preached in the local language of any Christian country. Hebrew, Latin and Greek, according to a tradition of the Gospels, were the three languages consecrated by the dogma of the Church; only in those languages did the Lord God agree to have the Gospels propagated. The Bulgarians were the first to go beyond the boundaries of dogma. The audacious demands of Martin Luther, because of which religious struggles that lasted for centuries broke out in Europe, were met in Bulgaria six centuries before the protestant reformer was born.

GREATNESS AND DECLINE

Boris (852-889) had worked as the skilled builder of a state, whose destiny it was to realize equality of status for all Slavdom; he had fought not only against the great political power of the church, not only against the unshakeable Christian dogmas. The work of Boris antagonized part of the Proto-Bulgarian aristocrats. They found a sympathizer in the person of his son Vladimir (889-893), and availed themselves of his brief reign to go back to the old ways. But Boris left the monastery, to which he had retired to end his days, deposed Vladimir and placed Simeon (893-927), his second son, on the throne in his stead.

The mighty foundations laid by Boris were made for a lofty and brilliant edifice. It would have been difficult to find a more gifted builder for it than the second son of the Knyaz. Simeon had studied in Constantinople at the Magnaura School, the finest school of his day. Highly educated, a capable statesman and commander, Simeon was, indeed, the man who could answer to the strenuous demands of the moment.

He spent his reign in frequent wars, chiefly against the Byzantine Empire, and also against the Magyars or the Serbs, egged on against him by that Empire. The uninterrupted successes of these wars allowed Simeon to proclaim himself Tsar and to raise the head of the Bulgarian Church to the rank of a Patriarch. Thus the complete equality between Bulgaria and Byzantium was proclaimed. What is more, Simeon entitled himself 'Tsar of the Bulgarians and the Romei (Greeks)', and did not hide his aspiration to capture Constantinople and to replace the Byzantine Empire by a new, Slav Empire of the Bulgarians. His plans were far too ambitious, but they did not once appear impossible to realize, to such a level had Simeon succeeded in raising his country.

Besides building, the crafts and trade (one of Simeon's first wars was waged to secure a regular mart in Constantinople for the Bulgarian merchants), an extensive popular culture flourished in his country and that was his chief achievement. Two principal schools — in Preslav and in Ochrid — created great models of early mediaeval literature. It is generally recognized that the best poetic works and important philosophical achievements belong to that literature at that time. According to his contemporaries, Simeon himself took part in the cultural development of his country as an author or as a source of inspiration.

When Simeon the Great died, in 927, Bulgaria was the leading political power in Eastern Europe. There was no longer talk of rivalry between her and the Eastern Roman Empire, the Bulgarians were in the lead.

But Simeon's work had actually overtaxed Bul-

garia's strength. The endless wars — no matter how victorious they were — had undermined her economy; the wonderful buildings had further exhausted it. Simeon had left a great state which was in no condition to withstand blows. Immediately after his death, in the reign of his son Peter (927-969) the country's weakness became apparent. Besides external reasons, it was also due to internal ones: the feudalization of Bulgarian society had led to break-away tendencies. The boyars began to plot against the Tsar. The people, dissatisfied with the increasing taxes and frequent wars, joined in. Bulgaria began to lose her territories and her prestige. The Magyars invaded the country on the North, on the West the Serbs rose in rebellion, and the Byzantine Empire took advantage of their successes.

The Bulgarian people's dissatisfaction found expression in a heresy — Bogomilism. In the course of centuries it was to remain a 'Bulgarian teaching', crossing the frontiers of Bulgaria and carrying her name afar afield among the same kind of tormented, dissatisfied people, oppressed by the world system and the arbitrary actions of their masters. Bogomilism was to create an entire literature, a secret and apocryphal literature, it was to oppose the official Church long before the Reformation, a second cultural trend. Bogomilism was to be at the root of a number of rebellions in Italy or France and was to make the masters of those lands use the name of 'Bulgarian' as a cruel insult, because Bulgarian meant the insubmissiveness and the protest of their own peasants.

But it was still the tenth century and Bogomilism was active only in Bulgaria. It incited the peasantry

against the boyars, taught them not to take part in wars or the building carried out by the state. Under the form of a denial of all that was earthly, the Bogomils withdrew from the life of their country, declaring a kind of boycott against its government. Persecutions only strengthened their ranks, raising their preachers to the position of martyrs. A religious struggle began in Bulgaria before it did in all the other European countries, only half a century after Christianity was imposed on the country. It was very typical of Bulgaria and her history, and left a lasting imprint on Bulgarian culture: the Bulgarians created a heresy almost as soon as they became Christians. They made their own interpretation of Christianity, criticizing and revizing it. Simultaneously with the beginnings of the Church Slavonic literature a second literature appeared in Bulgaria, a secret apocryphal literature; the people themselves created it. The profoundly democratic character of Bulgarian culture — weren't the Bulgarians the first to translate the Gospels into their own tongue? — offered another opportunity, too: for every man to have his own opinion on the ideas of his time. The Bulgarians thus gained the name of heretics and were considered as such throughout the entire Middle Ages.

THE FIRST BONDAGE

The Byzantine Empire was fully aware of this favourable moment and decided to deal with its dangerous enemy. It took as its ally the Kievan Prince Svetopolk, who conquered almost all North Bulgaria (969). But his success began to frighten the Empire. The Emperor headed a campaign, reconquered North Bulgaria from the Russians, and proclaimed it a Byzantine province.

But Northern Bulgaria was not all Bulgaria. The lands of the South-west remained. There the events now brought to the fore as Bulgarian rulers the sons of the Comes Nikola (a high-ranking commander and governor of a province), David, Moses, Aaron and Samuïl. The first two fell in the wars against the Empire, but the last two stubbornly continued them.

This time it was indeed a matter of life or death. For thirty years Samuïl's Bulgaria defended its existence against the incessant campaigns of the Byzantines. At first Samuïl was victorious: he annexed Thessaly, retained Sredets and cruelly defeated the army of Basil II in Trajan's Pass; he also extended his

possessions as far as the coast of the Adriatic. The fears of the Empire reached a point at which the Byzantines succeeded in bribing Samuïl's brother Aaron. Samuïl slew him, for the struggle was so intense that there was no room for any fraternal feelings. And Samuïl's successes continued — he acquired part of the territory of Serbia.

But internally his country was not stable — feudalism had played its part. Individual boyars gravitated first towards the Byzantine Empire, temporarily stabilized, then back to the support of their own Tsar. The Emperor was lavish with his gold, convinced that with iron his successes were few. One after another a number of his feudal lords betrayed Samuïl. Others put up a long and desperate resistance. The fact that it took twenty years from the time of the first successes of Basil II against the Bulgarians until Bulgaria finally fell under his domination shows with what truly desperate stubbornness the Bulgarian people defended their country.

Then came the year 1014 and the battles in Belassitsa Mountain. All Basil's attempts to break Bulgaria's resistance came to nought. Then the Emperor outflanked his enemy, attacked Samuïl's troops in the rear and took fourteen thousand Bulgarians prisoner. Enfuriated by the stubbornness of the Bulgarians and by Samuïl's prolonged successes, Basil II did something unheard of: he ordered all the prisoners to be blinded, leaving one one-eyed soldier to every hundred men. Then he ordered the procession of the blind to be driven out through the winter blizzards towards Prespa, the capital where Samuïl was awaiting the return of his soldiers.

There is hardly another ruler or chieftain of a great resistance who has lived through such an experience — to witness the inhumanly cruel sight of fourteen thousand men, blinded because of their devotion to his throne. Samuïl was unable to survive it. He died of a heart attack on the spot, among those unfortunates. The last four years until Bulgaria finally fell under Byzantine domination were pure agony. Basil II, who gave himself the name of 'the Bulgar-Slayer', had completed the work to which he had devoted his life — he had put an end to the First Bulgarian Kingdom.

Bulgaria was now under Byzantine bondage. One might well think that it would be fatal—a mere three hundred and fifty years are not enough in history to create sufficient stability for a people. The Byzantine Empire was experienced in politics and in the technique of assimilation, and it ought to have succeeded in assimilating the Bulgarians. The independent Bulgarian culture was still very recent, its roots were still very tender and Byzantine influence, which was ubiquitous — in the administration, scholarship, customs and way of life — was sure to crush it.

The strange thing is that this time Byzantium did not succeed. The Byzantine clerics and officials complain in the writings that have come down to us, of their difficulties in dealing with this stubborn subjected people. The Bulgarians struck stubbornly to their own traits, and the heresy — a denial of the official faith and culture — did more than a little to help them in this struggle. A deep abyss, impossible to bridge, separated bondsmen and oppressors, and the slaves remained irreconcilable to the end.

Added to this the Empire had to deal with the very frequent rebellions that broke out in the Bulgarian territories. They broke out chiefly in the Western regions, where Samuïl's insubmissive spirit had been kept very much alive. Although disorganized and condemned to failure beforehand because of the foresight with which the Byzantines wove their web of intrigues around every rebel leader, these revolts created incessant difficulties for their oppressors. Bulgaria remained a land seething with discontent, eternally unquiet, all through the hundred and fifty years of Byzantine rule. The Bulgarians emerged from it with their sense of nationality unharmed, with their culture preserved, full of vitality and fighting spirit, to develop further in the following three hundred years, known as the period of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom.

THE REVIVAL

The pretext was insignificant, but the moment was well chosen. In 1185 two not particularly wealthy Bulgarian boyars from Turnovo proclaimed a rising against the Byzantine Empire. Helped by the Kumanians, the next of the barbarians to harass the Byzantine Danubian possessions, and by the difficulties that beset the Emperor, Assen and Peter extended the range of the rising almost all over Northern Bulgaria. The [Emperor's repeated campaigns beyond the Balkan Range to crush the Bulgarian revolt ended in failure. In 1187 he signed a peace treaty with its leaders and thus confirmed the revival of the Bulgarian kingdom.

For the time being it was confined once more to its earliest frontiers: between the Danube, the Balkan Range and the Black Sea. Scores of years of incessant efforts, many negotiations and much bloodshed were to be necessary to re-establish Simeon's Bulgaria under Ivan Assen.

The brothers Assen and Peter spent their reigns in frequent wars, each of which added another part of Bulgaria to their kingdom. But both Assen and

Peter fell at the hands of their boyars. Feudalism, now fully developed in Bulgaria, created even more powerful forces of disintegration than its earlier form. The entire history of the Second Kingdom is the history of the struggles between the separatist and the unifying trends. The Byzantine Empire played an important part in these struggles, maintaining ties with the Bulgarian boyars, staking on every sign of dissatisfaction and richly paying them for their treachery. And if, even for a short while, despite these internal difficulties the Second Bulgarian Kingdom again rose to a high level for a time, it was because the Byzantine Empire was suffering from the same disease — all Europe was feudalized, the power of kings or emperors had been undermined everywhere.

When Kaloyan (1197-1207) ascended the throne a great danger threatened the Balkans in the second year of his reign: the Fourth Crusade. The peoples of the Peninsula were already quite familiar with its features, knowing them well from the three previous campaigns.

It should not seem strange that the crusades were appraised in a different way elsewhere and here: the role of the crusaders was simply different in Western and South-eastern Europe. For the West, the crusades were the solution to a number of questions that had come to a head: the system of primogeniture, for instance, which deprived all except the firstborn of a noble family of a ruler's rights; knight errantry, which created troubles in the Western lands; the landless peasantry which, in its desperation, was a constant source of trouble to the authorities. All these unsolved questions were poured out, garbed in the

form of religious zeal, far from the West, directed towards South-eastern Europe and Hither Asia, far away lands known for their riches. In short, Western feudalism expelled from its midst the elements which it could not feed and pacify.

But would the South-east have been particularly pleased by such a solution? The region that had defended its prosperity against countless barbarians (in the eleventh and twelfth centuries their number was supplemented by the Usae, the Patzinaks, the Magyars and the Kumanians), had done so for its own account, and not to favourize decayed knights, and feed the ruined peasants of the West. After its first contacts with the crusaders, the Byzantine Empire (Bulgaria was part of its territory at the time) considered that it would have to meet them as the next lot of barbarians. In short they were to be given a bad welcome, with open or passive hostilities.

The crusaders of the first three crusades had poured out all their knightly boldness in the Balkans, the richest land at that time. Their own travel notes are witnesses of their feats. With knightly frankness the crusaders duly admit their unknighly, but very widespread actions, explaining them by the fact that the population of the Balkans was heretical and should therefore be treated as such.

The Empire dealt, in so far as it could, with an unknown species of new invaders. In the early thirteenth century these relations went so far that neither one side nor the other even bothered to observe even an outward semblance of propriety. There was no longer any question of the Holy Sepulchre in the Fourth Crusade, but of an openly admitted attempt

to conquer Constantinople. Thus, the campaign, inspired and supported by Venice (the new rival of the Empire in trade), captured Constantinople, then all the European possessions of the Empire, minus the Epirus, and founded a new Empire, called the Latin Empire, electing Baldwin, Count of Flanders, as its ruler. This took place in 1204.

The self-confidence of the new masters was so great that the question of treaties with the remaining rulers of the South-east — the Bulgarian and the Serbian kings — did not even arise. Since the Latins were the successors of the Byzantine Empire, it was obvious that they would take over her pretensions to the Balkan lands, too. In two or three great battles — the knights were masters of their craft — these lands could not fail to return to the throne of Constantinople. Baldwin was not worried by the fact that Kaloyan, who wished to obtain recognition of his rule, had recently placed himself under the wing of Rome and considered himself a Catholic. Baldwin opened hostilities against Bulgaria.

Kaloyan's brief and quite expedient adherence to the Papacy was abruptly interrupted. The Bulgarian Tsar began negotiations with Byzantine nobles in Thrace, promising them his aid, and this resulted in an outbreak of rebellions in several of the Thracian cities conquered by the Latins. Baldwin set out to quell them, but Kaloyan came to their aid with an army of Bulgarians and Kumanians.

A fierce struggle began between the intruder-knights and the local population. It culminated in the Battle of Adrianople, fought on April 14, 1205. This was a fierce battle, echoes of which spread all

over Europe, and the memory of which remained in the annals of many Western countries. The flower of their knighthood, led by their most distinguished commanders, met a cruel doom near Adrianople. The light Bulgarian horse, which had reached the walls of Constantinople many times and had sown terror amid its warlike neighbours, now won the upper hand over the heavy horse of the knights. The Emperor Baldwin was taken prisoner. Legend still points out one of the towers of the Turnovo castle as the dungeon in which he was imprisoned and met his death.

The truth is that after the Battle of Adrianople the Latin Empire was unable to recover. The superstitious fear felt by the Balkan population at the sight of the iron-clad conquerors, yielded to their will for freedom. The Bulgarian rulers played an important part in this prolonged struggle. Kaloyan, and later Ivan Assen, reconquered the Bulgarian lands from the Latins, and helped the Greek rulers of the Epirus and Nicaea against the crusaders. Despite their historical enmity with the Byzantine Empire, the Bulgarian Tsars realized that the Latin Empire was an even more dangerous enemy — dangerous for the destiny of the South-east in general. The comparative tolerance, the considerable democracy of the Orthodox culture would have been displaced by catholicism which was entirely foreign to the Balkan peoples. That is why Bulgaria helped the recovery of her enemy of centuries quite objectively.

THE SECOND RISE

Kaloyan, who won a number of Bulgarian victories, which returned to Bulgaria her former hegemony in the Peninsula, did not escape the fate of his older brothers. He was killed by one of his own commanders on the threshold of Salonika, which he had besieged. His soldiers took his salted body back to Turnovo, to bury it in the Church of St Dimiter, where the rising of the Assenyovtsi had been proclaimed.

Boril ascended the throne, placed there by the boyars who were directly involved in the murder of Kaloyan. This luckless ruler rapidly lost most of the lands reconquered by Kaloyan, groping his way unsuccessfully through the maze of international relations, moving from alliances to treachery, and trying to consolidate his authority by summoning a Great Council against the heretics. The document that has remained from this Council, the *Synodicon of Tsar Boril*, is the only record of his brief and gloomy rule. Thrice anathema against the heretics — this was not only a curse but an actual punitive sanction, approval of the terrible persecutions which began, because the

Bogomils expressed the widespred protest of the people against the supremacy of the boyars and the weakness of the Tsar. It inevitably followed that the people centred their hopes on the sons of their dead Tsar Assen, who were in exile.

They returned to Bulgaria with mercenaries who were joined by the population, besieged Turnovo and captured the city, because its inhabitants opened their gates to them. Thus an Assenyovets took his place once more on the Bulgarian throne. He was to rule under the name of Ivan Assen II from 1218 to 1241, a very long reign for the Middle Ages, and for a place like the Balkan Peninsula.

It is an understatement to say that the reign of Ivan Assen II repeated the brilliance of Simeon's. Under the fourth Assenyovets Mediaeval Bulgaria rose to heights that she never attained either before or after his reign. An extremely able statesman, Ivan Assen succeeded in achieving a balance in his foreign relations with Byzantines, Latins, Serbians and Magyars in such a way that without Simeon's strenuous wars of conquest he extended the frontiers of Bulgaria to the maximum. A single victorious battle at Klokotnitsa in 1230 and his flexible diplomacy included in Bulgaria the territories from Belgrade to Adrianople, from the shores of the Adriatic to the Aegean and the Black Sea. Ivan Assen II became the guardian of the Latin Emperor Baldwin II, who was a minor, and thereby influenced the acts of the Latin Empire which was already in great difficulties. Dynastic marriages connected the Bulgarian court with Serbia and the Magyars, where the influence of Bulgaria was also felt. Ivan Assen was the recognized

arbitrator in a series of negotiations between warring powers in his day, and won supreme recognition for his kingdom.

In those thirty years peace reigned in that perpetually restless Bulgaria, a peace the like of which had not been known before. The boyars, frightened by the memory of territorial losses during the reign of Boril, now rallied around the crown. Culture, the crafts and trade all flourished. Ivan Assen granted great privileges to foreign merchants, and thus drew his country into international trade. His reign was marked by the extensive construction of churches, fortresses and palaces.

A wonderful balance — that is the characteristic of the reign of Ivan Assen II. It should not be attributed only to the indisputable gifts of the Tsar. For several decades the Peninsula was left without foreign invasions, the external forces which would have taken away their own parts of the Bulgarian lands were simply divided or not yet strong enough. And, by a coincidence, this brilliance, never again repeated for Bulgaria, faded with the star of Ivan Assen.

In the reigns of his successors, the Byzantine Empire returned to its former place, not without Bulgarian assistance. Quite naturally, it immediately resumed its old role as regards its Northern neighbour: encouraging every attempt of the Bulgarian boyars to break away, skilfully intriguing and gaining influence in Turnovo. Both of Ivan Assen's young sons fell at the hand of boyars. Byzantine hangers on hatched plots against the throne with growing frequency. They either succeeded, and the puppets they placed upon it reigned briefly, to be deposed by the rival

party, or collapsed, and one pretender to the Bulgarian throne or another would be received in Constantinople.

A misfortune, most familiar to Bulgaria's territories, was added to the anarchy caused by the boyars: new invasions. The Tartars, a wild people of the steppes, who had formed their own nomad state on Russian territory and had spread to the West from there, becoming the scourge of the entire thirteenth century and the entire South-east, now pressed forward on Bulgaria's Northern frontier.

At the time when the Tartars began their incessant attacks against her Northern territories, Bulgaria no longer recalled her recent greatness in any way. The Magyars had broken off her Western regions, the Byzantines had mastered her Southern territory. A number of independent boyars ruled their own domains without recognizing the supremacy of the Tsar in Turnovo. In that period, North-western Bulgaria, for instance, became almost constantly independent of Turnovo, although it changed its masters.

For the Tartars, this kind of Bulgaria presented no obstacles. They constantly sent big groups of warriors across the Danube, robbed and devastated the lands bordering on the river and dragged Bulgarians off as slaves. A plague of barbarians, such as Bulgaria had not experienced for long, threatened to raze her to the ground. The boyars, whose domains were limited and whose soldiers were few, did not even try to resist the invaders. They depended on the fact that the Tartars did not know how to capture fortresses and locked themselves up in their strongholds, leaving the plains

to be devastated. The Tsar — powerless and deserted by the boyars — could not decide himself to fight the enemy.

It looked as if Bulgaria was finished this time, she had never faced such a powerful invader in such a helpless state. The sea of Tartars, which had drowned Russia, threatened to drown Bulgaria, too.

THE PEASANT TSAR

The desperate resolve of the people — for it was they who suffered the most from the Tartars — to seek their salvation themselves was embodied in the person of Ivailo. According to Byzantine annals, he was a swineherd. Like one of his much later sisters, Joan of Arc, Ivailo, too, claimed that he heard celestial voices calling upon him to set the people free from their conquerors. But, and this is the difference between the peasant leader and many peasant leaders of the Middle Ages who resembled him, Ivailo became Tsar. He made real for a short time the absurd dream of many peasant rebellions: a peasant king. This realization was fatal, for a king can no longer be a peasant, he becomes something which is just the opposite of peasantry. The history of Ivailo is not only history, it is also a great human drama and a philosophical synthesis.

In any case, the swineherd who heard celestial voices carried many peasants with him with his impassioned sermons. Their strength lay in their desperation. And because the Tartars were not an organ-

ized army, because they attacked and ravaged in bands, the bands of peasants were their equals in fighting. After several victories along the roads that led from one village to another, the fame of Ivailo spread wide all over Bulgaria and from the chieftain of a band he found himself the commander of an army.

All those whom the plague of Tartars had left without food and shelter, flocked to Ivailo's camps. Immediately, as in every peasant movement, another, age-old struggle flared up along with the one against the invaders: the struggle against the oppression of those who were masters of the land. As soon as the peasant army had driven the Tartars out of the Danubian lands, it went into open battle against the Turnovo Tsar, Constantine Tih (the Silent). For the Tsar had realized where the supposedly anti-Tartar movement was tending, and had led his small army against the peasants in the last battle. His soldiers either turned tail and fled for their lives or joined the ranks of the peasants. Tsar Constantine was killed and Ivailo set out for Turnovo to besiege and capture the city.

Tsaritsa Maria, a Byzantine Princess, stood beside the empty throne. No soldiers were left to her, nor had she many loyal boyars at her side. Acting on their advice, she opened the gates of Turnovo Castle to her husband's murderer, and offered him the crown and her own hand.

Now the dream of all rebellious peasants seemed to have been realized: a peasant sat on the throne, consecrated by the names of Boris, Simeon or Ivan Assen. What then?

It was highly improbable that the boyars, the tacit allies of all rulers, would reconcile themselves to such an insolent presence. They immediately got into touch with the Byzantine Empire, and even with the Tartars, forcing Ivailo to spend his brief reign in perpetual wars on several sides. He resisted firmly. He repelled blows, and won victories. But the victories kept him far from Turnovo, where the boyars put a Tsar of their own on the throne (a certain Ivan Assen III) and after his shameful flight, Georgi Terter. In the meantime Ivailo's army gradually melted away.

He was at the end of his resources. Abandoned by his own men and by strangers, betrayed and rejected, he sought refuge and an alliance with his first enemy, the Tartar Khan Nogai. Here, however, the vengeance of the born rulers attained him, those to whom Ivailo's rule had become a terrible portent. Sent by the Byzantines, Ivan Assen III appeared before the Khan and persuaded him to kill Ivailo. Thus, in the midst of a feast, the executioner struck off the head of the only peasant chieftain who was ever crowned. The years of his reign (or rather of his unceasing struggle) — 1277-1280 — were the last before Bulgaria was placed under Tartar supremacy.

The spontaneous resistance of the peasants to the invasion came to an end with Ivailo's death. The puppets of the boyars, who followed one another on the throne, were so colourless and ineffectual that they themselves came to an agreement with the Tartars so as to remain in power for a few years. For twenty years it was really the Tartar Khan who was in control of Bulgaria — Ivailo was no longer there to rid the Bulgarians of this plague.

But the memory of the only peasant tsar, of the avenger of the people returned many times to the Balkan lands. Whenever things came to a completely dead end (and this was not a rare occurrence in the Balkans), the people's resistance called Ivailo back to life. Several times — scores of years after his death — Ivailo appeared again, to lead the peasants in revolt against the rulers of the South-east, or against new invaders. These False Ivailos were the most convincing proof of the greatness of the Bulgarian peasant rebellion of 1277.

IN THE GLOW OF THE SUNSET

By means of his diplomatic adroitness and by straining his internal forces to the utmost limits, the new Bulgarian Tsar, Todor Svetoslav, succeeded in casting off his country's dependence on the Tartars. After one more strenuous effort, Bulgaria won back her territory between the Balkan Range and Strandja Mountain in a war with the Byzantine Empire. This was a new, but brief extension of Bulgaria's territory.

She thus entered the fourteenth century, a turning point not only for her, but for the South-east in general. And for all Europe, too. The fourteenth century, the *quattrocento*. It was to be of importance for the development of European civilization because of the growing prosperity of the cities and the self-confidence of their inhabitants, because of the pre-Renaissance in culture manifested in the works of Dante and Petrarch. This cultural ferment that spread all over Europe and was conditioned by changes in the social forces, was to follow its own paths in the Balkans.

There we shall learn nothing about clashes between cities and nobles—in the South-east the cities depended on the crown to a greater or lesser degree, and city folk knew nothing about the dependence of serfs. That is why the flourishing of crafts and trade met no opposition from any nobles in the Balkans in the fourteenth century. City life developed unhindered, domestic markets came into being and were connected with foreign trade. Here the rulers, be they Byzantine, Bulgarian or Serbian, encouraged this advance, granted privileges to craftsmen and merchants and spent large sums on building.

The intellectual ferment that had seized Europe found an original form here. The South-east, the home of all heresies, now gave birth to them with growing frequency. They were varied, ranging from extreme mysticism to pure rationalism. They gave rise to a rich and many-sided literature whose works bore the imprint of great skill. In the fourteenth century the Balkans entered the pre-Renaissance, swiftly and unhindered, for the secular principle, typical of the new aspect of European culture, was based here in the Balkans on an old and uninterrupted tradition. The numerous heresies had preserved the philosophical achievements of Antiquity; the lawful hegemony of secular power over that of the Church did not allow mediaeval dogmas to master people's minds entirely. In the Balkans all the great clashes were not wars between nobles, but usually a general resistance to invaders. That is what prevented the Balkan boyars from living in perpetual rivalry, and often rallied them around the crown. For all these reasons, the pre-Renaissance period, the development of which passed

through so many struggles in the West before it reached the Renaissance, and went on from there to Absolutism, travelled along a widely-trodden road here.

According to all suppositions — in so far as it is permissible for history to deal in suppositions — the Balkans should have entered upon the New Era far earlier and more completely, if the last wave of barbarians had not poured over the Balkans, if it had not destroyed everything that had already been achieved, and if the course of their history had not been halted and the clock turned backwards over the whole Peninsula.

However, there was still a century to go before that event — the fourteenth century. In the Balkans it was characterized by the heights to which the prosperity of the Serbian kingdom rose under Doushan in the 1330s, by a brief recovery of the Byzantine Empire before the middle of the century, and by the last brilliant reign of Ivan Alexander in Bulgaria, a member of the dynasty of the Shishmanovtsi (1331-1371).

From its very beginnings it was marked by the tragic features of any sunset. The first of the Shishmanovtsi, Mihaïl, lost a decisive battle against Serbia, which was already very powerful, and his son reigned for a year, having been placed on the throne by the Serbians. Then the boyars, dissatisfied with the foreign influence, placed the third of the Shishmanovtsi on the throne, Ivan Alexander.

His reign may be taken as an example of the picture of the Balkans in the fourteenth century. It is entirely filled with intricate political moves, because the Peninsula was threatened on two sides simultaneously: on the West the Magyars were expanding

with energy, while the first attacks of the Ottomans were beginning to the South. This did not exhaust the dangers to which Bulgaria was exposed. Catalan mercenaries were running wild in Thrace, dissatisfied with the pay they received from the Byzantines; another Byzantine ally, Duke Amadeus of Savoy, was fighting Bulgarian rule along the fortresses on the Black Sea. Ably manoeuvring between Byzantines, Serbians, Magyars and Turks, Ivan Alexander succeeded in adding Northern Thrace and part of the Rhodopes to Bulgaria and in retaining the fortresses along the coast.

This was the last expansion of Bulgaria which from the reign of Ivan Assen onwards had incessantly fought on several sides. The growing secessions of strong boyars were added to the struggle against external enemies. The North-western regions of Bulgaria only formally submitted to the Throne of Turnovo; the North-eastern regions, the Dobroudja, had developed into an independent realm; a new peasant ruler, Momchil, had formed his own impermanent little state in the Rhodopes, defended by peasants who had escaped from their lords and by starving mercenaries.

The political integrity of Bulgaria was finally destroyed. The destiny of the Byzantine Empire at that same time was no better, for there various pretenders to the crown were fighting among themselves and dividing the forces of the state. Serbia was to experience the same thing somewhat later — there, the flourishing state of the country very soon passed over to a decline. In the second half of the century no less than forty little realms could be counted in the Balkans.

Moreover, in the political disintegration, which everywhere marked the end of the feudal system and the dawn of the New Era, Bulgaria gave one last proof of her former greatness. No matter how strange it may seem, the fourteenth century was a period of a cultural advance never before seen in her history.

Beginning with Bulgarian literature, we shall notice that the two principal trends in it — the official and the apocryphal trends — come to full fruition in the fourteenth century. The first remained connected not with pure orthodoxy, but with a 'state heresy', the teaching of the Hezychasts. Since, in the course of centuries the dominant church was unable to deal with the influence of the protest movements, it worked out a heresy of its own, militant orthodoxy. Its extreme mysticism, the denial which it preached, might well be considered a negative phenomenon in Bulgarian life, if it had not been this teaching which created the school that produced the most outstanding representative of ecclesiastical literature in the fourteenth century in general.

Theodosius, Euthymius, Gregory Tsamblak, Constantine the Philosopher — the four names are sufficient to represent the great literary tradition of the Eastern ecclesiastical culture on the eve of its doom. We find in their numerous works remarkable artistic skill, mature professional craftsmanship, profound, not abstract but active political conceptions. It is not by chance that after the fall of Turnovo, it was the representatives of the Kilifarovo Literary School, and no others, who found such a warm welcome in the Orthodox countries which were still safe and sound, where they occupied high ecclesiastical posts and

in their turn taught many followers in the field of literature. With the fame of their names, and Euthymius because of his martyrdom (for a Sultan punished him by exiling him), they kept alive for a time the dying glory of Bulgaria.

The second cultural trend in Bulgaria — the apocryphal trend—reached no lesser summits in the fateful fourteenth century. We shall no longer speak now of Bogomil literature, which was a part of that trend. The fourteenth century brought many new voices to the Apocrypha. The fewest were among the Adamites. (This heresy, which seemed to be the logical extreme of Bogomilism, did not produce any special literature.) But the teaching of Varlaam and Akindin, two Byzantine preachers, found favourable soil in Bulgaria. Certain works, which revived (before the Renaissance) the rational philosophy of Antiquity, belong to it. The townsfolk, with their new leanings, their aspirations to acquire positive knowledge, were the creators and readers of this literature.

Still, at the same time certain books, which prove Bulgaria's great ties with distant lands, were widespread in the country. Some of these repeated in curious local variants the works on knighthood of the West. Others introduced anew the Jewish, pre-biblical legends of Jehova. It was as if the great spiritual movement in this fated country wished to free itself of the bonds of space and time and expressed that vast variety of human thought that heralded the New Era.

The art of painting in Bulgaria was also new, very new indeed. The preceding century had already imprinted on the walls of a small boyar chapel in Boyana

images of the Evangelists that belonged entirely to the Renaissance in spirit. The ecclesiastical canon had been overcome in these paintings, and this triumph of an artist in his search left its traces on the fourteenth century paintings in Turnovo and Ivanovo. The presentiment of an approaching end seemed to have freed the creative forces of the Bulgarians from the prejudice and superstitious fear engendered by tradition.

These achievements — unknown elsewhere about the middle of the century — could not fail to be linked with the name of Ivan Alexander. The man who actually allowed the rich gifts of his people to develop; the ruler who even went so far in his freedom from prejudice that he surpassed Justinian, the son of a Byzantine soldier who had raised an actress from the Hippodrome to the throne. Alexander took a Jewess to wife, a merchant's daughter, and allied himself by marriage to the city street. The subtle variety of his personality, expressed in his statesmanship and his cultural policy, was a distant forerunner of the changes that set in during the Renaissance in the West.

But the reign of Ivan Alexander was not only rich in brilliance. There is something strange about the great cultural advance of Bulgaria, when contrasted to the unending suffering of her people. The incessant wars—no longer the great and fateful wars, but clashes between nobles, great and small, the evil wrought by impoverished mercenaries, the outrages of impostors — all this led to something fateful in the final count: the burden of a daily life from which there was no issue for an entire people. Ruined by a century which had not brought it a single day of peace and se-

curity, the Bulgarian peasantry felt itself estranged from the rulers in Turnovo as never before.

There are phenomena in history which do not impress themselves on one's vision as cultural brilliance does, for instance. The daily sufferings of peasants are a phenomenon of this kind. But in the decisive turning point of History, it was not the scholarship and the artistic achievements of Alexander's day that were to have the last word. That word was with the ruined and desperate Bulgarian peasant — the Tsar's soldier.

THE VERY PROLONGED FALL OF BULGARIA UNDER OTTOMAN RULE

The history of mankind is subjected to strict laws — no one disputes them. But there are sometimes chance happenings in it that can influence the life of entire peoples for centuries. Thus, the Balkans, whose peoples were among the first to set out along the road to the New Age, entered upon it practically the last in Europe, because they suffered the last conquest by barbarians — the Ottoman conquest.

Its distant forerunners did not augur anything unprecedented. Certain Turkic nomads had formed a small principality on the territory of the declining Seldjuk Sultanate. Bythina is far in Asia Minor — so the Balkan rulers must have thought when the Ottoman Turks captured Brussa and Nicaea in the early years of the fourteenth century. The weakness of the Byzantine Empire, busy with dynastic strife, allowed them to extend their possessions towards the Aegean.

Shortly afterwards the first Ottoman boats and rafts began to harry the shores of Europe. But in those same years they were so ruined by internecine strife, they had become so much of a no man's land, that no Balkan ruler felt obliged to defend them. What is more, John Cantacuzene, the self-styled Byzantine Emperor, had called the Ottomans into Europe as his allies against his rival. It should be noted that the care for the defence of the Balkan shores had fallen on that curious realm of Momchil, the Condottiere who had headed the rebellion of the Bulgarian peasants of the Aegean shores and the Rhodopes. In several battles — unexpectedly successful — Momchil repulsed the Asiatic intruders. But the Byzantines, who did not consider the Ottomans as a danger, suddenly saw in Momchil a most dangerous leader. They joined their efforts to those of the Ottomans and wiped out Momchil's insubmissive domain. This was highly indicative: not one of the Balkan rulers ever thought of making use of the people's spontaneous resistance to the invaders in order to free the Balkans from this mortal danger.

And things followed their inevitable course. Tolerated by some of their allies here, if not yet invited, the Ottomans captured the bridgehead of the Peninsula. The fortresses of Tsimpe and Gallipoli were taken by them in 1352-1354, and permitted them steadily to increase their conquests in the Balkans.

For a very long time, right up to 1371, the year of Ivan Alexander's death, nobody opposed Ottoman expansion. Individual Bulgarian detachments, headed by the sons of Alexander, suffered defeat; the Byzantine proposal that Bulgaria and Serbia should

help support an allied fleet in the Aegean, was rejected, for Alexander supposed that that fleet would be turned against the Bulgarian Black Sea fortresses.

Such was the picture of the half century, as it had passed between the fall of Tsimpe and the fall of Turnovo: the Balkan rulers could find no common tongue to agree upon a joint struggle against the barbarians. A rigor, like that preceding death, seemed to have seized that age-old land, worn out by high tides and low tides. The political disintegration of the Balkan countries, the great danger from the West where the Magyar king was pressing forward, made it easy prey for the Ottomans. Barbarians as far as their development went, unsettled, religious fanatics, they hurled themselves upon the Balkan land which promised them ease and a prosperity which they had done nothing to create

If there is anything extraordinary in all this history, it is the fact that the Ottomans *did* take a very long time to conquer lands whose rulers did nothing to promote allied action. Until the fall of Sofia in 1382, with the exception of the big battle at Chernomen in 1371, where two provincial nobles, the brothers Vulkashin and Ouglesha, vainly tried to stem the Ottoman wave, we shall see that it took the Ottomans as much as thirty years to conquer Thrace, unhindered as some allege.

The reason for this slowness shows through the lines of the chronicle: the people, although left to themselves, were fighting the Ottomans. There was no firm authority beyond the Old Road and beyond Thrace in general, that is why the Bulgarians resisted separately, furiously, hopelessly, defending every

village, every pass and every fort. An epic struggle, truly, only mentioned in folksongs and legends.

But in 1382 Sofia fell. At that time the Bulgarian lands were divided into three parts: Shishman, the son of Alexander (1371-1393), ruled in Turnovo, his brother, Ivan Stratsimir, ruled Vidin and its region, and Ivanko was the master of the Dobroudja. But they had been forced to recognize Ottoman supremacy for many years.

Realizing the approaching danger to their lands, some of the Balkan rulers, the Bulgarian Tsar (though in secret for he was a vassal of the Ottomans), the Serbian and the Bosnian kings, at last decided to form an alliance. Two big battles were partly the result of this alliance, the one fought at Plochnik in 1387, and the Battle of Kossovo Polé (1389). The first brought a victory, the second a terrible defeat of the Christian forces. The Sultan Bayazid, who had come to power after his father's death at Kossovo, was now strong enough to deal with his enemies.

Ivan Shishman was his first victim, for his realm was surrounded on all sides by conquered territory. Because of his hopes at Plochnik and Kossovo Polé he had broken his oath as a vassal, and refused to supply the Sultan with troops, having even sent them to the allies. In 1388, a big Ottoman punitive expedition occupied a number of forts belonging to the Turnovo Kingdom of Bulgaria, and wiped out Ivanko's domain in the Dobroudja. Hardpressed on all sides, deprived of any aid, Ivan Shishman awaited the last hour of his rule.

He decided to await it in Nikopol, because the Magyars had vaguely promised him support. Turnovo

remained under the leadership of Euthymius. And here, an age-old feature of Bulgarian life found expression: here culture had never been separated from political life, from the demands of the moment, so deeply democratic, so effectively was it rooted in that life. Euthymius, the Patriarch, known everywhere as a mystic and a great writer of his day, became a military commander. He headed the resistance of the Bulgarian capital inspiring its defenders by word and deed.

The inevitable end of Turnovo came after the firm resistance of many big and small fortresses, and after their capture by fierce fighting. On June 15th, 1393 the capital, chosen by Assen and Peter, was captured. But what followed its fall was actually a continuation of the struggle.

Resistance flared up in the town at once — its head was the Patriarch Euthymius. Bayazid was already thoroughly familiar with the resilient forces of Bulgaria, the conquest of which had lasted half a century, so he decided to uproot them to the end. He made a terrible example of Turnovo, taking measures which the Ottomans only repeated two or three times at a later date: he massacred all the outstanding local people.

The conquerors called 120 of the Turnovo boyars to the Cathedral and put them to the sword; to this day their bones are preserved in a big wooden trough, as if they were the relics of a great struggle. The conquerors tore from their homes hundreds of noted merchants and exiled them to Asia Minor. Finally to destroy the Bulgarian spirit completely, he struck at the leader, Euthymius. But the great awe in which

this shepherd of his flock was held, did not allow the oppressor to kill him; Euthymius was exiled to the Rhodopes.

Ivan Shishman did not live to welcome Magyar support. Once again his hopes were deceived. Instead of King Sigismund, Bayazid the Thunderbolt appeared at Nikopol, and after a terrible siege the last fortress of the Turnovo Kingdom fell into his hands.

Only the Bulgarian Kingdom of Vidin was left, in agony, placed simultaneously under Magyar and Ottoman supremacy. For a moment it looked as if the weakened resistance would flow back again into the conquered Bulgarian lands. King Sigismund had at last gathered a large army of crusaders for a campaign. The Duke of Burgundy, a number of German nobles and also the Prince of Wallachia had all responded to his call. The army crossed the Danube and entered the Western Bulgarian lands. Vidin opened its gates to the army, and Oryahovo was reconquered with Bulgarian aid.

A big battle was fought between the Ottomans and the crusaders at Nikopol. Just as Kaloyan's light horse had destroyed the heavily-armed knight more than a century ago, now, too, Bayazid's hordes routed the crusaders and drove them into the marshes along the Danube. Then began a terrible massacre — for two nights and two days after the battle the Ottomans slew their prisoners and led their chieftains away into captivity.

The Battle of Nikopol (1396) marked the fall of the last Bulgarian Kingdom, that of Vidin; the end of the last Bulgarian dynasty — the Shishmanovtsi. The last descendants of this tragic family scattered

to foreign courts to continue their participation in all the later anti-Ottoman operations. All of them were unsuccessful, because the star of the Ottomans was only just rising.

The Battle of Nikopol was the first clash between the Ottomans and the West. The defeat which the knights suffered acquired improbable dimensions in the eyes of the Europe of that day. Legends came into being about the power of the Asiatic barbarians. 'As strong as an Ottoman' was the comparison made by the French peasants of that period, and it owed its origin to the Battle of Nikopol.

For a long time Europe refrained from a new clash with the Ottomans. At a later date there were to be negotiations, and treaties were to be signed with the despised persecutors of Christianity. The new order had not yet been consolidated there, and centuries would have to pass before absolute monarchies with their regular armies were firmly established.

For Europe to gain time, so that her development could continue peacefully and naturally and come to an end with the picture it presents today, someone had to block the path of barbarians towards European civilization. This historically important but thankless task fell to the Balkan peoples. The ravenous barbarians settled on their lands, the strength of the Ottomans was spent in their expansion to the Western frontiers of these lands; by their frequent rebellions the Balkan peoples forced the sultans to conquer the Balkans again and again.

That is why, from the fourteenth century onwards the development of the Balkan Peninsula followed a

road that was radically different from the one pursued up to then — it was slow, hampered and twisting. It was particularly hard for Bulgaria which no longer had any common frontier with unconquered countries, and which remained in the heart of the boundless Ottoman Empire.

EARLY BONDAGE AND EARLY UPRISINGS

Every foreign bondage is a terrible misfortune for the oppressed peoples who fall under it — the Bulgarians had memories of Byzantine bondage and for this reason so desperately defended their independence, although life in the late feudal Bulgarian state had not been easy for them. Ottoman rule, however, did not bear comparison with any other, for it had its own unparalleled characteristics.

Under Byzantine rule, Bulgarians were at least in the same cultural sphere of influence: in the Middle Ages, with its typical religious culture, unity of faith meant a great deal; under Byzantine rule, Bulgaria was included in a state which was highly developed for its time. Although nationally oppressed, they were not forced backwards in their cultural or economic development.

The new bondage brought the Bulgarians face to face with a social system which was completely foreign to them in spirit, and as far as its level of historical development was concerned, the new conquerors, and later rulers of Bulgaria, stood at a decidedly lower

level than their bondsmen. The Bulgarians had been settled on their own land for seven hundred years, they had developed the habits of owners and producers and had mastered all the arts that distinguish civilized man from the barbarian. They were now forced to co-exist on the same territory with an intruder who was scarcely emerging from a nomadic way of life, and the conquerors did not succeed in breaking with this way of life quite so rapidly. The phenomenon of *guroutsi* was something well-known in Bulgaria over an extremely long period right up to her liberation. These were Turkic peoples, not always Ottomans, who continued to live nomadically together with their large flocks, spending the summer in the mountains and wintering on the plains. They continued to reject agriculture and to be quite alien to the whole material culture—leaving aside the spiritual entirely — of the whole surrounding milieu. Naturally, co-existence with such an element, which was exceptionally unruly, savage even, was not to the good of the settled economically-developing Bulgarian.

Throughout the early period of bondage, Bulgaria's conquerors were mainly nomads. When the Ottoman authorities forced them to settle, in order that their policy of assimilation by oppression could be carried out, they preferred the towns where, as participants in the administration or the garrison, they became not so much producers, as consumers of all that their bondsmen produced. The gradual settling of the Turkish element was stimulated and controlled by the Sultan's authorities. As they had now to take full possession of Bulgaria, resettling their

own people there, the Sultans adopted a general policy of *sürgüna* (migrations).

This was a measure which had never been taken in any place before — the enforced movement of huge masses of the population in two entirely different directions.

The Sultan, by deliberate decrees, ordered thousands of Bulgarians to be exiled to the other side of the Straits, all over Asia Minor, while Turkic peoples came from the opposite direction to be settled in the vacant Bulgarian villages. This process, 'bleeding', had never been known in the Balkans; it was a severe blow. The reduction of the human composition in Bulgaria was to take a long time to overcome — it was not just the effect of a complete defeat in war.

In order to attain its other aim — to raise the living standard of its own people — the Ottoman government took a second highly significant step; it introduced a tax on children. The government would take one boy from every family at set intervals of time. These children were never to return to their homes. They were taken away to the great cities of the Empire where they followed a deliberately planned course of study, which was nothing more than a school for religious fanaticism and military skill. The majority became Janissaries — the most hard-hitting and merciless military force of the Ottomans — and the remainder were kept as slaves on the large estates of the Ottoman nobles. From among these boys — who were not connected with any human environment and were the absolute property of the Sultan — were chosen the Ottoman viziers, military leaders and high officials. For this reason the Ottoman

rulers raised themselves to a high level in a short time and enforced an oppressive administrative system that amazed people with its attainments.

The Ottomans consciously infused foreign blood into their ruling caste. Their wives were local, but quite cut off from the local environment (for the conquerors who had swarmed onto the Peninsula were an exceptionally virile and warlike people). There was, however, one other measure taken to strengthen the Turkish basis — the forcible conversion to Islam of compact masses of the Balkan population — that did not achieve the desired result. Those Bulgarians, Bosnians or Albanians did in fact change their faith, but did not become divorced from their own peoples, because the government did not uproot them from their local environment; they were left in their villages and right up to the very end never became one with the Turks.

In the first century or two of their rule the Ottomans did succeed in creating their own ruling caste through their consistent policy of assimilation. A consequence of this is the present physical appearance of the Turks — there is no trace in them of Turkic blood, of the relationship between the Ottoman conquerors and the Mongols, Kazakhs and other peoples of the same branch of mankind.

However, the Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian blood that the Ottomans succeeded in forcibly diverting to their own stock did not exclude the future existence of the bondsmen as peoples. Although reduced, they overcame this loss of blood, and by the New Era they numbered millions.

To hold the Bulgarian territory in subjection (be-

cause this was the immediate hinterland of Constantinople, which had already been named Istanbul, and the main roads of the Empire passed through Bulgaria) — the Sultans designed a complex system of administrative oppression and control. Garrisons were moved into all towns; they in fact settled there and established a large number of Turkish quarters in the Bulgarian towns. The conqueror's administration embraced all branches of the political and economic life of Bulgaria — it did not leave anything which was Bulgarian without sanction and supervision. One could discuss the Ottoman system of taxation endlessly — it would have been difficult indeed to invent more various and numerous taxes than these, which drained the economic strength of the subject-people and were designed with a ridiculously low level of existence in mind for the Bulgarian peasants, and townspeople.

There are no miracles in history, but all the same it is a miracle how the Bulgarian lived through the five centuries of Ottoman domination without disappearing from the face of the earth. Also, within the framework of the same five centuries his cities grew and he developed as an agricultural producer and craftsman, and reserved strength for the development of culture and education. How did this happen?

This has already been mentioned at an earlier stage; Bulgaria, which had served as a sort of bridge for all barbarian invasions also, by virtue of its contours, made it possible for its inhabitants to fight and defend themselves. Bulgaria is a very mountainous country — a feature which at first is not considered useful, for a mountain is only stone and scree. If

Bulgaria, however, had not been rich in mountains, then the Bulgarians would have extricated themselves from slavery by other means.

As soon as the foreign invasion had crossed its roads, plains and cities, a large part of the population of the plains withdrew to the folds of the mountains. In Bulgaria one can see villages and small meadows and gardens in the most unlikely places; on high, inaccessible mountain slopes. They came into existence centuries ago, when the fertile soil of the plains was a source of mortal danger. The cultural level of these mountain hamlets will seem quite improbable—usually the least cultured section of a people lives in the mountains, but here, the former inhabitants of the plains had sought salvation in the mountains, and they were often townspeople. It was mainly the towns that had been seized by the intruders, and there, any material prosperity in Bulgarian hands had meant death for the Bulgarian concerned.

So, in this way, either in the mountains, or in those parts of the Bulgarian plains not crossed by main highways, the Bulgarian had the opportunity to develop, although at a slower tempo and constantly harassed throughout the five centuries of oppression. Apart from this, he fought. When we mention the Bulgarian resistance during this period, we should not presume that it was like any other for it was very different. One difference was one of its main features: nowhere in Bulgaria (with the exception of the Balkan Range and the mountains in general) were there compact masses of Bulgarians free from the presence of the Ottomans. That would have been enough, but there was also the fact that Bulgaria had

no common frontiers with lands that were free of Ottoman domination. Serbia had common frontiers with the Hapsburg Empire, Greece and Albania with the sea, which was used by free vessels and traders. Bulgaria was surrounded by occupied territory and had become that part of the Empire where the oppression was at its most intense. Unfortunately for Bulgaria, the Ottomans' military routes passed through her in all directions. The situation was entirely different for Bosnia, Montenegro and Albania, where these highways petered out into mountain paths, continually threatening the dangers of ambush.

For this reason, the longest-lived form of Bulgarian struggle against the Ottomans was guerrilla warfare. This existed everywhere where the Sultan ruled, but it was most widespread in Bulgaria.

Throughout a period of 500 years, Bulgaria stubbornly continued to produce its own soldiers — the *haidouti* (guerrillas). They were illusive because they lived and carried out their actions in the mountains, passes and forests, but their punitive hand frequently and without warning was laid upon the Spahis' and Beys' estates. They fell upon large caravans and instilled horror into smaller companies of troops. Later, when the Empire was in difficulties, and its power was weakened for a short time, the *haidouti* emerged from their hiding-places, gathered together in hundreds or even thousands and attacked the big cities.

These countless Bulgarian warriors without names composed whole epics with their feats. The inspiration for these epics was not only their feats, which were doubtlessly heroic, but also hope. The Bulgarians had no one in whom they could have faith. Europe

was convinced of the invincibility of these barbarians, and took comfort from the fact that they had satisfied their hunger in the Balkan and Danubian territory. Russia, who, because of her policy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was to become a constant enemy of the Turks, had not yet succeeded in dealing with the Tartars and the problem of her own unification. Is it then any wonder that the peoples' faith in their *Haidout* defenders grew to colossal proportions?

It would be inaccurate to consider that Bulgarian resistance in the early years of Turkish rule, which had seen plots and uprisings, was exhausted with the *Haidouti*. We know little about them, because at that time it was as if the world had forgotten the name of Bulgaria, and the desperation of various peoples oppressed by the Ottomans affected it very little.

All the same, in 1404 — scarcely ten years after the fall of Turnovo — the Bulgarians along the River Morava rose, led by two of the last Shishmanovtsi — the Princes Konstantin and Frouzhin. This was part of a retarded military alliance between Bulgarians, Serbs and Romanians. The Ottoman forces concentrated their attention on the leaders of the uprising — the rebellious Bulgarians — who had succeeded in freeing many of their fortresses, and annihilated them. The alliance disintegrated. This did not prevent the Bulgarians from intervening in the mutinies that had broken out in Ottoman society itself after the defeat of Bayazid I at Ankara. They took part on the side of one or the other of Bayazid's sons and filled the ranks of Bedreddin Simavi's uprising; he was the great Turkish heretic and village leader. Even

the decades immediately following the defeat of Bulgaria, the Bulgarians did not cease to fight.

In the years 1443 and 1444, when the allied campaigns of the Poles and Magyars had penetrated deeply into Bulgaria, reaching Sofia and Varna, the enslaved Bulgarians, who vainly dreamt of being freed, joined the Christian banner en masse. The battle at Varna, in which King Wladislaw himself perished, cost thousands of Bulgarians their lives.

The later fortunes of the Ottomans brought them face to face with Austria. Until she established a firm frontier with the Empire, Austria was to wage frequent wars along her South-eastern boundaries, seeking an alliance with the unsubmissive people in the Balkans in order to harass the Ottoman front. Austria did not ask any more of the Bulgarian, Serbian or Wallachian revolts, for even in her most far-sighted plans, the re-emergence of the enslaved states was not envisaged. For the bondsmen themselves, however, the promises received from Austria — whether they came by way of Dubrovnik traders or by way of the Catholic priesthood in the Balkans — were a ray of hope. Although it was clear that the Hapsburgs did not have their liberation in view, the Bulgarians consistently rose in revolt.

A great deal of activity accompanied the Austro-Turkish War, declared in 1693. Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania freed themselves from the Sultan's supremacy and began to attack Ottoman possessions South of the Danube. The Bulgarians came down from the mountains and aided the Christian forces. Great bands of *Haidouti*, apparently consisting of two to four thousand men laid waste Ottoman vil-

lages on the plains, occupied some towns, attacked Sofia and even Adrianople (Edirné). For five whole years — until 1598 — Ottoman rule in Bulgaria was insecure, and songs of that period refer to 'Bulgarian times'.

This fighting spirit prompted several Dubrovnik merchants, who had been resettled in Nikopol and Turnovo, to draw a large number of leading men from North Bulgaria into a plot. The Greek metropolitans from the area also became involved in it. Intense preparations began which, as we shall see from the following events, bore fruit.

In 1598, when the Wallachian prince Mihaïl Hrabri (The Brave) again crossed the Danube, the Bulgarians rose in revolt. They freed Turnovo (the uprising takes its name, the First Turnovo Uprising, from that) and proclaimed one of their leaders as Tsar — Shishman II; but their forces were quite insufficient to stand fast against the thousands of Ottoman troops. The rebellion was crushed, and thousands of Bulgarian families left their land in order to escape the fearful retribution of their rulers. This was an additional Bulgarian attempt at liberation which had an extremely bad effect on the life of Bulgaria. After each unsuccessful revolt and uprising — and in the course of five centuries in Bulgaria, they remained unsuccessful, with cruel predictability, thousands of Bulgarians fled before the brutal power of Ottoman punitive expeditions. In this way, significant Bulgarian colonies were established in Wallachia, Moldavia, Bessarabia, Transylvania or the Banat. They were isolated islands of Bulgarian life in a sea of strangers, beneath a foreign sky. An old version of

Bulgarian can be heard even today in many places in Eastern Europe: the exiles have been cut off from the gradual development of their people, and have succeeded in preserving, but not in developing their culture. These frequent losses became a historical misfortune for the land — it was precisely the active and alert element that was leaving Bulgaria. Time was needed to replace it, but it became obvious that it was continually being replaced, for the fight did not cease, and the place of the exiled rebels was continually taken by new ones.

The seventeenth century brought both hope and disillusionment to the Bulgarians. Ottoman military glory had suffered a heavy blow under the walls of Vienna (1683), and the Catholic propaganda, the purpose of which was the preparation of the Austrian campaign against the Ottoman Empire, had made very widely-known promises to the Bulgarians.

The short-lived influence of Catholicism in Bulgaria in the seventeenth century was connected with the name of a notable campaigner — Peter Parchevich. Born in Chiprovtsi, in North-West Bulgaria, Parchevich received his higher education at Loreto and other Italian cultural centres. Later, he returned to his native country as a Catholic archbishop and his activities as a gifted politician began at that time. As early as the year 1646, the Bulgarians formed a new plot and used Parchevich to attract external forces to their side.

An endless Odyssey, which gradually turned into a Golgotha, was undertaken by this remarkable Bulgarian. He appeared at the Polish and Austrian courts, at the Senates of Dubrovnik and Venice; he brought

the question of the liberation of his people to the attention of the Pope himself. Parchevich, who was used by the Vatican as a legate to the European rulers — for he enjoyed a great reputation as a diplomat and an orator — won for himself international prestige. He did not once omit to raise his vital question, that of the liberation of Bulgaria. Continually in contact with those involved in the plot in his homeland, he studied, although from afar, the Bulgarian frame of mind and the state of readiness for an uprising. His persistence in the defence of a cause that neither affected the European powers nor Catholicism brought him into conflict with the Vatican. This great Bulgarian died far away from his homeland, misunderstood and discouraged — and just on the eve of great events.

The Sultan's failures in the Austro-Turkish war had again awakened Bulgaria's fighting forces. In 1683, a conspiracy was organized in Turnovo, the leaders of which had talks with the Moscow patriarch, and placed their faith in Russia. The plot, however, was betrayed, Turnovo was again ruined, and the band of survivors from the conspiracy crossed the ridge of the Balkan Range on the way to Sofia. Hundreds of rebels from both sides of the mountain joined them. The Bulgarians in Sofia also rose. These actions were quite fruitless because the authorities brought thousands of troops from all sides to the regions in revolt — the year 1683 was marked by one more defeat.

However, the Bulgarians' burning desire for freedom was so inextinguishable that after a period of only five years a revolt began in Chiprovtsi, the birthplace of Parchevich. It relied on the support of the Austrian

armies, who had broken through the Ottoman defences, and were advancing through Serbia. A few bands, which had gathered together from North-western Bulgaria, hastened to meet the Austrians and to smooth their path to Bulgaria.

This time, the Ottomans entrusted the crushing of the uprising to Imre Tekeli, a Magyar feudal lord, who because of his hatred for the Hapsburgs, had become their ally. Thus, the Bulgarian villages that had risen in 1688 owe their defeat to power politics. In fact, not a stone remained standing in Chiprovtsi and Koutlovitsa, and the Bulgarians who by some miracle had escaped from the area, went into exile.

However terrible it was, this crushing defeat did not daunt the Bulgarians. In the following year — in order not to let the right moment pass for the Austrian advance — almost the whole of Western Bulgaria from Vidin to Veles rose. This uprising was of particularly great use to Austria, which proclaimed one of its leaders as king, the only king that Bulgaria has had. A few months later however, when these same interests made it necessary for Austria to withdraw her troops in order to defend its rear against France, Ottoman forces overran these provinces and so devastated them that there did not remain even beasts for ploughing, and the peasants were forced to dig their meadows with mattocks.

It seemed as if the steadfast spirit of the Bulgarians was to be crushed for a long time. From the end of the 17th century, the defeats became too frequent, too bloody and too exhausting for Bulgaria. Or perhaps not? Perhaps the Bulgarians only changed the nature of their expectations. They had become convinced

that Bulgarian interests were not the same as Austrian; but at the same time, the star of Russia rose in the East. Although its borders had still not reached the Black Sea, its historical path was clear in advance, and the Bulgarians understood this.

Thus, from the seventeenth century, traces were discernible of a long-lasting relationship, of a great hope: for an alliance which is based upon common interests is historically justified and secure. After the seventeenth century, Bulgarian faith did not simply rest upon 'Father Ivan', the almost mythical early image of Russia; it rested upon the victories of Peter I and Catherine II.

A PEOPLE ARISES FROM THE ASHES

The eighteenth century brought the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Its feudal order, which had put back the development of the Balkans, entered its late phase. The feudal separatism which had undermined the strength of Byzantium, Bulgaria and Serbia, was now to have its effects on the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman feudal lords, who had previously had military obligations to the central government, had already become independent of it by the eighteenth century and had become absolute masters of their land. Their despotic handling of their peasants passed all bounds, and the government, which was involved in an insoluble crisis, sold the Imperial lands, mines and natural resources to them. Corruption, which inevitably accompanied Ottoman administration, had reached its height.

The Empire, which was still established on three continents, fell into chaos. It is true that its territory was already eaten away by successful Austrian and Russian campaigns, but the damage they did was certainly not considerable enough to explain its internal

weakness. The causes of this, in fact, were also internal. The extreme conservatism of the Ottoman system of government, the complete lack of law and order, which did not allow the economically active element to expand were fatal to the further development of the Ottoman Empire. Just as at one time it had hampered the flourishing development of the advanced Balkan states, in the eighteenth century the imperfections in its own system hampered its own development. This empire, which extended over the richest parts of Asia, Africa and Europe, and those which had been civilized for the longest period, was not to be merely among the last to enter the New Era—it was not to enter it at all. Whilst the subject peoples could not free themselves by fierce wars of liberation, the Ottoman Empire itself was to become the incurable 'sick man', whose sickness was to be taken advantage of by European states which were successfully progressing towards capitalism.

The subject peoples also suffered from these cheerless circumstances, which were provoked by the retarded and enforced barbarization of the South-east. Although hampered, their own historical development had gradually brought them to a higher economic level; but their activities, whether connected with commerce or crafts were carried out at risk of death, because every wealthy Christian in the Empire in fact signed his own death warrant, or at the very least, exposed himself to the danger of robbery.

The unsolved contradictions, in which the Ottoman Empire became involved during the eighteenth century threw her into a state of feudal anarchy. Its components were numerous, and in the first place was

separatism. In many provinces of the Empire, particularly in the peripheral ones, various governors, or simply large feudal landowners, declared their independence from the Sultan, paid thousands of mercenaries, and began to fight among themselves, or with Istanbul. Such small, internal wars spread throughout the whole Empire, from Egypt and Syria to Kars, Vidin and Roussé. Sometimes the separatists had to be crushed by huge campaigns on the part of the Sultan, but most frequently the government was compelled to tolerate them, for its forces were not sufficient to be present wherever its feudal lords happened to be in revolt.

The second anarchic element was the soldiery itself. The treasury's financial embarrassments frequently left the troops without pay, and precisely that section which had always been paid by some means, the Janissaries, had no desire to fight at all. The highways of the Empire overflowed with countless hungry, ragged former soldiers, deserters and all sorts of desperate people. They were compelled to plunder in order to survive, and in order to plunder, it was necessary to kill and burn down. Thus a terrible, and until then quite unknown form of crime that was widespread everywhere and from which peaceful people could find no defence, became part of the everyday life of the Empire.

The third anarchic element was the victims themselves, who had until then been peaceful people. As the government was not in a position to defend them, it abandoned them to their own devices, after which

the Janissaries, and the troops of Pashas¹ and Ayans² began also harassing the defenceless population; and there was nothing left for the victims except to arm themselves with whatever fell into their hands and to break completely with a peaceful existence.

From the 1780's onwards, the era of the Kurdjaliy came to the whole of the Balkans, and this had barely come to an end by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century. This was something more than the Thirty Years' War in the West — more as far as time, and the cruelty of the deeds were concerned. It found most intense expression in Bulgaria, because the three anarchic elements were simultaneously present there. Splinter elements from Istanbul, Pashas, Ayans and Agas³ installed themselves in almost every large, and even small town in Bulgaria. They marshalled warrior bands from among local or Anatolian Turks, who lived by robbery. All kinds of war-like bands wandered with great relish over Bulgaria, which was famous for its fertility and the skill of its population.

It was as if Bulgaria's whole economy was paralyzed for years on end. Having seen dozens of their harvests set on fire, the Bulgarians ceased to sow and reap. Many of them took to the mountains where they formed hamlets, living in barrows and changed to stockbreeding; another section, however, moved from the villages to the towns. This was because the Sul-

¹ Pasha — Turkish title (abolished in 1934) given to governors and high military and naval officers

² Ayan — Notable

³ Aga — Master

tan's government, in its extreme weakness, permitted the towns to be responsible for their own defence. This could take place if the rulers neglected to enforce a basic prohibition which had been in force for four hundred years — the prohibition against Christians possessing and carrying arms. At that time, when Istanbul had become a head without a body, the Sultan changed this. Every town had the right to build itself a fortress (and this had been forbidden for four hundred years because the government was afraid that such a fortress could be seized by Bulgarian rebels), to form an army and to defend its position. For this reason, the Bulgarians from the burnt-out villages headed for the towns. A movement set in which was just the opposite of that which had taken place at the beginning of the period of Ottoman rule — Bulgaria's towns again became Bulgarian.

Later, even the villages were to follow the example of the towns in self-defence. The peasants were to raise wooden fortifications and keep armed watch. Time had to pass, however, before the state of anarchy could be overcome, and Bulgaria restored to a peaceful way of life; and in the meantime, the country was to live through unbelievable vicissitudes.

The high point of these vicissitudes was the rebellion of Pazvantoglou of Vidin. An ordinary officer in the Janissaries, half-Turkish and half of local stock, Osman Pazvantoglou gained influence in Vidin, proclaimed himself its Ayan, and, at a later date, Pasha of Vidin. His revolt coincided with the successful breakaway of the Belgrade Janissaries, and threatened to sever from the Empire its Western areas. For this reason, the Empire did not spare resources and

several times directed great campaigns against Vidin. The greatest of them numbered 120,000 men, the sort of numbers the Ottomans had used against Vienna.

Pazvantoglou's strength was due to his alliance with the Bulgarian population. A skilful demagogue, he freed the peasants from taxation and distributed arms to them. In this way, the breakaway movement collected an army of enviable size and was immensely popular. Only thus can the Sultan's continual failures in his struggle against Vidin be explained. Pazvantoglou exerted his authority and was recognized as the lawful Pasha of Vidin, but pursued an independent policy, negotiating with the European powers about joint action against Istanbul. It was no secret that Pazvantoglou wished to take the place of Sultan Selim.

Perhaps the breakaway of the Vidin Pasha would have had a greater effect on the later fate of the Empire if it had not coincided with the Napoleonic wars. At that moment no one was in a position to wage a great war against the Sultan — neither the Hapsburgs nor the Russian Tsar; Pazvantoglou's suggestions met with no response. Also, an event near to Vidin, the Serbian rebellion of 1804, drove the Bulgarians into disengaging themselves from the breakaway, and extending helping hands to their brothers in revolt; thus the Bulgarians withdrew from Pazvantoglou.

A little after the death of Pazvantoglou, the state of anarchy gradually subsided. Its end should not only be ascribed to national self-defence, for attack is always more effective than defence; but the implacable Kurdjaliy leaders gradually established themselves in definite regions and towns. They settled

down, made their new position legal and became *derebeys* (autocratic rulers) of these places. The government was forced to recognize their independence, and after a lapse of time, by means of endless intrigues, bribes and brute force, succeeded in ridding itself of some, and in attracting others to its side.

Thus the state of unrest gradually died out in Bulgaria. It brought a new disaster, unsurpassed even in the period of conquest, a new lag in her economic and cultural growth; but it also brought something positive. In the Kurdjaliy period, the Bulgarian returned to his towns, which he abandoned centuries ago. This was to have a decisive influence on the whole of his later development. He gained self-esteem in the towns, because he defended them with arms. Throughout the whole of Bulgaria during the Kurdjaliy period, the Bulgarians fought on a common basis, defended and attacked, and acquired a great deal of military experience. As we know, the Ottoman government, from the time of its establishment right to the end, had never permitted Christians to serve in its army; also, as we know, it forbade them to carry even a knife, it then becomes clear what immeasurable consequences the great anarchy from the end of the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century would have for the Balkan liberation movements.

The Bulgarian's reawakened national consciousness, his National Revival and struggle for cultural independence swiftly and surely followed the Kurdjaliy period.

THE NATIONAL REVIVAL AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION

In spite of all the obstacles placed in front of the Bulgarians by foreign bondage, they entered the period of their National Revival about the end of the eighteenth century. The actual start of this can be fixed as the year 1762 — when the monk Païssiy from the Hilendar Monastery completed his *Slav-Bulgarian History*.

Païssiy was the first ideologist of the growing Bulgarian bourgeoisie — that as yet thin stratum of economically developed elements in society, that were already fighting for national self-esteem. Feudal anarchy did not allow Païssiy's work to bear fruit — for a long time his book remained available to only a small circle of Bulgarian priests; but its deeply patriotic spirit inspired these Bulgarians in their turn to make efforts to awaken the national consciousness of their people.

Great are the merits of the Bishop Sophronius of Vratsa, who possessed an original literary talent, and was one of the founders of the new Bulgarian litera-

ture. Driven all over Bulgaria by the whirlwind-like attacks of the Kurdjaliy, Sophronius spent a certain time in Pazvantoglou's captivity, then succeeded in fleeing to Wallachia, and there published the first book written in the Bulgarian vernacular *Nedelnik*, a miscellany for Sunday reading, (1806). His example was followed by two other important educators, Yoakim Mirchovski from Kirchevo, and Kiril Peichinovich from Tetovsko. This small group of writers laid the foundations of the modern Bulgarian literary language. Its deeply democratic essence — for it aimed at embracing the vernacular — brought enlightenment to many Bulgarians. It is almost unbelievable, but throughout the whole era of Ottoman domination, the Bulgarians had not been without education and literature. When the conquerors destroyed the independent Bulgarian church, they spiritually subordinated the Bulgarians to the Greek Patriarchate in Constantinople. Then, instead of one, the Bulgarians had two mighty enemies who, by joint efforts, tried to assimilate them. The high-ranking Greek priesthood in this sense pursued a consistent policy in Bulgaria.

The Patriarchate, however, never succeeded in placing Greek priests in the villages; there church services were read in Bulgarian with Bulgarian books. Literary schools grew up to cater for the needs of these churches in several monastery centres in Bulgaria. Although the greater part of their works consisted of the copying of prayer-books and translations from Greek, there was no lack of original works. Even in the sixteenth century, such literary centres as Sofia, Kratovo and Rila Monastery grew up.

This domination did not completely destroy the educational activity that has a deep and healthy root in Bulgaria. Schools attached to the monasteries were in existence where the future priests received their education. More rarely this type of 'cell' schools (so termed because classes were usually held in the monks' cells) were also to be found in the Bulgarian towns.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the growing Bulgarian bourgeoisie, because of its intensifying economic activity, felt the need for education. For this reason, the number of 'cell' schools in the towns increased rapidly, and the teachers in them were already laymen. Naturally, Bulgarian education had advanced little from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century — it had preserved rather than developed a great tradition; but it became obvious that it was quite inadequate for the New Era that it had to serve.

[During the same four centuries of slavery, the position of the Greeks in the Empire was rather different. They had kept their spiritual dominance over all Christians in the Ottoman Empire, and had a highly-educated church aristocracy, from which the Ottoman government quite frequently drew its own officials, diplomats and interpreters. Situated on the coast, the Greek towns, by means of their many sailors and traders, kept in contact with the rest of the world and were under its constant influence. Also, towards the middle of the eighteenth century, a significant difference existed as far as culture was concerned between the representatives of the newly-developing bourgeoisies.

The new Bulgarian bourgeoisie began to make use

of the Greek schools and literature in order to reach the level demanded of them. In many Bulgarian towns, secular Greek schools grew up, and the wealthier Bulgarians sent their children to the famous Greek higher education institutes in Istanbul, Smyrna and Bucharest. The Greek bourgeoisie, which was much stronger economically than the Bulgarian, made use of this in order to de-nationalize precisely this active stratum of Bulgarians.

It only succeeded to a certain extent. In truth, the wealthy Bulgarian traders and the manufacturers in the towns formed a clique which was later to earn the insulting label 'Grecophile'. These were people who, unsure of the capabilities of their own people, hastened to be absorbed into the more advanced Greek bourgeoisie. Their later social activities were, looked at objectively, to make the Bulgarian National Revival a more difficult process.

However, the efforts of the Greek bourgeoisie and Patriarchate to hinder the development of Bulgarian national consciousness failed from the beginning. Bulgarian youths, who had graduated from the Greek secular schools, in most cases accepted the ideas of the Greek democrats, the most persecuted by the reactionary Patriarchate; they most frequently turned into angry opponents of the Phanariot ideology, and conscious fighters for their own cultural independence. Their first problem was to open a purely Bulgarian secular school of a contemporary standard.

The year 1839 saw the realization of this aim. A school was founded in Gabrovo, an iron and leather-trade centre, because it was precisely developing Bulgarian industry and trade that required a secular

education in the native language. Barely five years later, a girls' secular school was also opened at Plevven. In a short time, most Bulgarian towns had founded their own schools at different levels — pupil-teaching schools¹, 'class' schools² and secondary schools.

The development of the educational movement in Bulgaria was unbelievably swift, enthusiastic and widespread, as if this was the first proof of the effort of which this people, which had undergone four and a half centuries of bondage, was capable. In spite of the unfavourable attitude of the Sublime Porte and the open hostility of the Patriarchate, the Bulgarians built schools all over the country, with their own resources and at their own risk. In a short space of time, an illiterate Bulgarian was not to be seen in the towns, to such an extent was education considered compulsory for every Bulgarian child.

Book-publishing developed along with the establishment of schools. At the beginning this catered primarily for the needs of schools, but soon books with a secular or ecclesiastical content began to be published, either original or in translation. Each of them was an achievement. Under the conditions of oppression and persecution, publishers collected funds from the people, and with them, published books in

¹ Pupil-teaching; the Bell-Lancaster system of education in which there is only one teacher to a school, who teaches the eldest children; they then impart what they have learnt to the younger children

² 'Class' schools; this type of school had one teacher to each class who taught all subjects

Bulgarian abroad. On their last pages can be found the list of subscribers, hundreds of Bulgarian peasants and townsmen who had subscribed a few *grosha*¹ so that another book could be published. The year 1844 is marked as the beginning of the Bulgarian periodical press, with Konstantin Fotinov's *Lyuboslovie*.

In a space of less than thirty years — the last decades of Turkish domination — the Bulgarians were to have many periodicals and newspapers. Published in Istanbul, Smyrna, Leipzig and chiefly in Bucharest, the Bulgarian periodical press was to play an important role in its people's efforts at liberation. It was brought, mainly in secret and with many risks, to every Bulgarian Library Club. After the schools, hundreds of Library Clubs were set up all over Bulgaria, also with the resources of the people, in order to wage war against Turks, Greeks and Grecophiles. These Library Clubs became centres of national awakening and modern education. They also laid the foundations of the Bulgarian theatre.

To round off the results of their struggle for cultural independence, and to obtain the status of a separate nation, the Bulgarians had to rid themselves of the hold of the Greek Patriarchate, and to have their own national church. This was a struggle in which not a small amount of blood was to be shed; this bloodshed was to continue for decades, and was to finish only in 1870, with the foundation of the Bulgarian Exarchate. The religious struggle, which

¹ Grosh — equivalent of 20 gold centimes. All accounts in Bulgaria under Ottoman rule were kept in *grosha* (pl.)

had begun in 1776 in Ohrid, whose first victories were won at Vratsa and Turnovo, expanded into a school for the whole Bulgarian people, and was one of the first stones laid on its road to political liberation. The social forces which were also to play a role in its revolutionary movement, the 'older' and 'younger' generations — conservatives and revolutionaries — made their presence felt in it, sometimes in alliance, sometimes in mutual contradiction, they led the fight for an independent Bulgarian church to a victorious conclusion. However, when they had achieved this, the Bulgarians had already set themselves the next task in their historical development: the national revolution.

THE GREAT FERMENT

If we study the last decades of Turkish rule, we shall be convinced that they were an unceasing battle, although its forms and manifestations were various. One after the other, Bulgarians passed from participation in various foreign revolutions to local incidents connected with the Russo-Turkish wars, from small plots to rebellions or massive uprisings with economic causes, from isolated cases to Haidout warfare to fighting in regular bands, and from these, to a united secret revolutionary organization. All these stages of development would have occupied at least a century elsewhere, but here — where the period of bondage had been so long that it had driven the people to complete desperation, where the foreign government was so stubbornly conservative that it allowed not the slightest degree of autonomy for its subjects — the liberation struggle, by some superhuman effort, passed through its historical stages only in decades.

If we examine them, we shall remain convinced that at that time it was as if nothing else existed in

the everyday life of the Bulgarian apart from the struggle. We shall explain how — although until the beginning of the nineteenth century, foreigners did not even know the name 'Bulgarian', and even confused him with the Serb, Greek or Wallachian — towards the middle of the century, they came to be discussing the 'Bulgarian question' quite specifically; it was because the Bulgarians forcibly brought this question to their notice — with their blood.

Even at the very beginning of the century, they brought it to the notice of Russia, which was fighting the Ottomans (1806-1812). The main instigator of these steps was the educator Sophronius of Vratsa. It was then that the first volunteer Bulgarian army, under Russian command, was raised to take part in the war; but Napoleon was advancing on Russia and she concluded a peace treaty with the Porte.

In the years 1828-29 and 1853-56, at every new Russo-Turkish war or after it — the same event was to repeat itself with dismaying persistency; the Bulgarians would rise, in order to facilitate the Russian advance, and to take advantage of it. Russia would win, and the Western powers would then compel her to abdicate her territorial gains, otherwise she would lose, because these forces would directly aid the Ottoman Empire. The Bulgarian uprisings would be cruelly crushed by Istanbul and thousands of Bulgarians would seek asylum in Russia.

From 1826 onwards, internal policies in Turkey itself underwent a significant change. The Sultan succeeded in introducing an army reform, which was followed by an agrarian reform. The Porte made lavish promises to the peasants, but in fact their posi-

tion improved very little — it was simply a change of exploiters for them. Apart from this, in some parts of Bulgaria — for example in the West a mass of landless peasants appeared; they rose in rebellion. Also, in that year, 1839, the Bosnian feudal rulers rebelled and the governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali, who had broken away from the Ottoman Empire, waged a successful war against her. Never had the Empire been so near to its doom.

After the Peace of Unkiar Iskelesi (1833), the Porte was placed in a position of dependence on Russia; in order to make use of her military aid, the Western powers took steps to secure their influence over the Dardanelles. They forced the Ottomans to promise equal rights for all subject nationalities in the Empire, and in this way to change the motive that permitted Russia to interfere in Ottoman affairs, that is, the defence of the under-privileged Christian population.

So, by the Peace of Adrianople (1830), Serbia and Greece had already broken away from the Empire. After persistent rebellions, in which Bulgarians also took part en masse, after Russia's successful wars against their oppressor, these peoples received part of their own territory and formed their own states. The break-up of the great, many-peopled Empire was in progress, and she was, either by means of promises of reform, or by means of terror, to attempt to postpone this.

The so-called 'era of reforms' in Turkey meant almost annual rebellions for the Bulgarians. They wanted to force the government to fulfil its promises, and put forward demands of an economic nature.

The uprisings were at their most intense in North-West Bulgaria, which is relatively at a greater distance from Istanbul, and borders on Serbia and Romania. They began in 1835 and lasted until 1850 — the people of this region stubbornly warred against the Porte's demagoguery for a whole 15 years. Their significant, although shortlived victories, their mass support and tenacity led to success; the Porte was forced, after many punitive expeditions, to meet the demands of the Bulgarians from the North-West.

This series of big uprisings — some of them involved twelve to fifteen thousand men — had enormous consequences for the Bulgarian revolutionary movement. They were proof of the maturity of the Bulgarians, who had not risen in such numbers for centuries, and had not withstood punishment and terror for so long. For the first time in centuries they forced the world to discuss the 'Bulgarian Question' and again gave Russia a pretext for intervening in Balkan affairs.

The Crimean War (1853-56), brought new troubles to the Bulgarians. It became obvious to them that the Russian advances in the South had met with the persistent opposition of the Great West European Powers, and that Bulgaria could not rely solely on Russia for her liberation. It was necessary for the Bulgarians themselves to change from spontaneous to organized forms of fighting, from economic and educational to political demands.

The foundations of the Bulgarian revolutionary organization were laid by G. S. Rakovski, the father of Bulgarian freedom. His activities commenced even before the Crimean War when, in co-operation with

the Greek revolutionaries, he founded Bulgarian rebel groups in Wallachia, and at a later date, during the war itself, participated in a broadly-based plot for an uprising in Bulgaria. Rakovski's life was filled with wanderings; he was persecuted, arrested, expelled and forced to flee from one state to another. Rakovski worked abroad for Bulgarian liberation. In Braïla, Marseilles, Istanbul, Odessa, Belgrade and Bucharest. He was continually watched by the local authorities, without means of support, but in spite of this, he succeeded in publishing revolutionary pamphlets and in founding *Dounavski Lebed* (Danubian Swan), a revolutionary newspaper. In 1861, he produced a fully drawn-up 'Plan for the Liberation of Bulgaria'.

At this time, Rakovski was in Belgrade, where the Serbs were preparing for war against the Ottoman Empire. He offered to create a Bulgarian volunteer army on their territory — the First Bulgarian Legion — and at the same time to incite the Bulgarians under Ottoman domination to a general uprising. Rakovski threw himself wholeheartedly into the task, and young Bulgarians began to head for Belgrade. Their training was cut short by a quite unforeseen reverse — the Serbs reached an understanding with the Ottoman Empire without war, and at her request, ordered the First Bulgarian Legion to be disbanded. This happened in 1862 — at the same time a rebellion broke out in Turnovo, which had also counted on a Serbo-Turkish war. External conditions made military action impossible, but Rakovski, the authoritative politician, was entrusted with the most important mission in the Balkans.

For a year, Rakovski toured three of the Balkan capitals, Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest, in order to carry one of the most delicate plans into action; the Balkan states were to join forces in a common war against Turkey. This plan, however, foundered because of the crude chauvinism that had grown up among the bourgeoisie of the young Balkan states.

From 1863 onwards, Rakovski settled in Bucharest, from whence, with Bulgarian emigré funds, he equipped and sent small bands across the Danube into Bulgaria. Their aim was to harass the Ottoman government and to raise the hopes of the Bulgarians.

In 1866, a revolutionary organization, the 'Secret Committee', was formed in Bucharest; this consisted of wealthy Bulgarian merchants who acted in agreement with the Romanian government. A general uprising of all subject Christians in the Empire and the creation of a Balkan confederation was planned. These slogans were adopted in 1867, and the Committee declared that it would fight for the 'dualism' of Turkey and Bulgaria on the lines of Austro-Hungary.

The Bulgarian Secret Central Committee (BSCC) could not have succeeded in uniting the revolutionary Bulgarian emigrés under such a slogan — all its young members left and gravitated towards the 'Supreme National Secret Bulgarian Civil Directorate', which was founded by Rakovski also in 1866. Rakovski worked at the formation of bands in Romania, and their dispatch to Bulgaria, where they were to raise the morale of the people and propagate the ideas of the approaching revolution.

This was the final stage of Rakovski's ideology. It was to hold sway over the revolutionary Bulgarian

emigrés for a few years, during which the remaining Bulgarian committees were to undertake similar activities, or to be content to send appeals to foreign governments and exhortations to the Bulgarian people.

The fighting rebel bands — although they had only been in existence for a short while — were responsible for a heroic part of our national revolution. There is a sort of revolutionary romanticism in their very essence. Small bands of about ten men, who had condemned themselves to a martyr's death would cross the Danube by night and head across the plain towards the Balkan Range. Usually with large Ottoman units close on their heels, as well as the armed Ottoman population itself, they incited the people to rebellion in every Bulgarian village, received the joyful approbation of their fellow-countrymen, and continued on their way. In the Balkan Range the members of these bands managed to fight running battles for a day or a week against an enemy that was a hundred times stronger. Most of them perished, and the Ottoman commands carried their severed heads through the towns and villages; those taken prisoner suffered agonizing tortures before they were hanged.

In 1867, the bands of Panayot Hitov and Philip Totyu met with just such a fate, and in the following year, those of Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadja. Sent with high hopes by the revolutionary emigrés, self-sacrificing to an incredible degree, these few hundred men trod a true path of Golgotha through their homeland in bondage. Their valour won the hearts of all Bulgarians and awoke in them a desire for liberation.

It soon became obvious that fighting in bands

was unsuitable for the purposes of liberation, because they were small in number, in no place were the people prepared in advance for an uprising, the men traversed peaceful territory and were an easy prey for their pursuers. The government turned its brutality upon the Bulgarian population and subjected it to unimaginable terror after the capture of every band; this soon made Bulgarians fear every contact with the bands. Also, after the death of Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadja, whose feats became widely known abroad, the revolutionaries abandoned this method of fighting and finally adopted a wide network of committees in Bulgaria itself.

■ The setting up of this network was the work of Vassil Levski, the greatest figure of the Bulgarian national revolution. Born in Karlovo, and having emigrated in order to direct his efforts towards aiding the revolutionaries, he had renounced his orders as a monk. Levski was a member of the Second Bulgarian Legion of 1868, and went to Wallachia after it was disbanded.

Levski lived through all the feverish activities of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement. He was a legionnaire at Belgrade, standard-bearer in Panayot Hitov's band, and after the death of Hadji Dimiter and Karadja, he put forward the idea of the network of committees. In 1868, with the help of the Bucharest merchants, Levski undertook his first reconnaissance in Bulgaria. He established a link with the alert, rebellious elements in the larger towns, gauged the mood of the people, and returned to Bucharest. The following year, Levski returned to Bulgaria empowered to act by the more patriotic citizens. In just

a few months he had formed dozens of internal committees, in which teachers and priests, craftsmen and peasants took part. Bulgaria's mood was revolutionary and its people ready for battle. Levski, having drawn this conclusion, returned to Bucharest.

His task was not an easy one here. He had to convince the emigrés — already split up into various camps and schools of thought — that the future of Bulgaria's freedom lay neither in sending in bands from outside, nor in dualism, nor in the illusion that external forces could influence the Sublime Porte to Bulgaria's advantage. Bulgarians had to rely entirely on themselves for the careful preparation of a large, successful uprising. Here he found the full support of Lyuben Karavelov, another colossus of the Bulgarian national revolution, who was a notable writer, publicist and journalist. Levski's complete ideological consistency raised him above the level of both his opponents and supporters, and in 1870 he became the head of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee — the main organization to prepare the way for Bulgarian liberation. Immediately after the foundation of the Committee in Bucharest, Levski again returned to Bulgaria and this time he completed a formidable task; he formed new committees, strengthened those already formed, arranged a secret postal system and collected quite big sums for the purchase of arms.

A notable conspirator. Levski had the strings of the whole organization in his own hands. In truth, one cannot imagine how one man succeeded in coping with and leading the considerable activities of the internal committees, and guiding them in questions of the minutest detail. He succeeded in arranging secret

elections in Bulgaria for representatives at the First Session of the B. R. C. C. (Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee). At this session in Bucharest, the revolutionary organization adopted its constitution and programme in a spirit of democracy and co-operation with all peoples.

In July 1871 after the meeting, Levski was again in Bulgaria. He was collecting money for arms and organizing the military training of the committee members and of the population in general. The organizer of this task must have met with difficulties which seemed insurmountable, if we bear in mind that he worked with thousands of people in hundreds of villages on a completely illegal footing, that the enemy, and enemy spies lurked everywhere. Many legends about Levski remain from these years. The people called him the 'Apostle of Freedom' and credited him with supernatural qualities, for in truth, Levski would appear and disappear like a spectre, horrified the authorities with his dexterity, and created a great feeling of confidence among the people who had given birth to him. An aura of superstition surrounded this man of thirty: this cannot only be explained by his total devotion to one activity: Levski is a rare example of a talented, generously-gifted revolutionary. Only in 1871 did he decide to bring his aides into the management of the inner organization, so personally responsible did he feel to every fellow-conspirator.

One of them was Dimitar Obshti, a strange personality. He was also a revolutionary in spirit, but of a radically different type, a terrorist, a participant in the revolutionary movements of some neighbouring peoples, a Garibaldian, a 'knight of the dagger' as he

was called. Obshti was for direct action, and not for long-lasting preparations for a nation-wide uprising. He was for flamboyant terrorist actions which would attract the attention of the world to Bulgaria; he could not understand why Levski travelled exhaustively around Bulgaria, collecting 10 or 20 grosha for arms from every single peasant, when with one blow — by an attack on the treasury — the organization would be able to acquire millions.

Levski was against such action — it would have provoked arrests and the destruction of the secret network. He forbade Obshti to commit the robbery, but Obshti undertook the daring and successful attack on his own. In the autumn of 1872, a huge sum fell into the hands of the organization; but this was the beginning of the end. Among the arrested was Obshti who, true to his own tactics, betrayed many fellow-conspirators in order that the trial should have wide publicity. These revelations placed Levski in mortal danger, but the Apostle did not think of himself, only of his life-work, which was in danger. He went to Lovech — in the centre of the failure — in order to remove and hide the Committee's archives and to stop the revelations going any further. There, betrayed by a fellowconspirator, Krustyo the priest — Levski was detained.

As was to be expected, the Apostle behaved with such bravery, taking the whole of the blame upon himself, that to a great extent he deceived his tormentors and judges. For precisely this reason, the remaining accused were merely sent to prison or detention, while Levski and Obshti were sentenced to death. On the 19th February, 1873, Levski was hanged in

Sofia, but half-dead, because on the previous evening he had made an unsuccessful suicide attempt.

The obvious conclusion was that his work would live on after his death. In this case, that would not be the right one, for Levski was the true spirit of the internal organization, irreplaceable and unsurpassed. His successors, who were no less self-sacrificing, were however, much less gifted and lost ground; they did not succeed in moulding the scattered committees into one unit. In spite of all this, Levski's firm policy of safeguarding his fellow-conspirators bore fruit. The organization was only destroyed in those areas which Obshti knew about; it was intact in all other parts of Bulgaria.

If a nation-wide uprising came quickly, then it could be supported by the organization, even without the Apostle — that was the conclusion of the BRCC in Bucharest in 1875, when Hristo Botev's influence upon it had grown. He was the second great figure in the decisive stages of the development of the Bulgarian revolution. Botev, unlike Levski, became immortal more as an ideologist of liberation. Unlike Levski, many things exercised an influence on Botev, the entirely original revolutionary and self-educated activist, who was moulded by the world revolutionary climate of his time. He was more of a revolutionary democrat, and to some extent a Utopian socialist; but in all his activities, Botev also appeared as a great poet, and talented publicist, the spokesman of the revolution whose works have never lost their force, originality and power.

After efforts to re-establish the Committee network, the revolutionary activists, seizing the oppor-

tunity offered by the uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina, swiftly gave the signal for an uprising in Bulgaria. This was the Stara Zagora uprising of the Autumn of 1875 — one which was badly organized, half-hearted, and a complete failure. Even before it took place, there had been disagreements in the BRCC itself. Karavelov resigned, he disagreed with the young element which insisted on speeding up the revolution. After the failure of the Stara Zagora attempt, the Committee in Bucharest put an end to its existence. A few young, confirmed revolutionaries came to Ghiurghiu, the Romanian port opposite Roussé, in order to be closer to Bulgaria, and from there to undertake the organization of the future uprising, for they felt that the hour had struck. Bulgaria had to show the world that she existed, that her people were ready to pay for freedom with their blood.

REVOLUTION AND LIBERATION

It is difficult to say for certain that the Ghiurghiu Committee in which there were no more than three apostles of Levski over thirty years of age — had counted on a military victory in the organized uprising. It was obvious, however, to these young people that Bulgaria had no time to lose. The Great Powers were already interested in the Balkans and Balkan affairs; the Balkans were rapidly becoming what they were to be for decades — Europe's greatest trouble-spot.

At the beginning of January, 1876, the 'Apostles' — they were called so in memory of Levski — crossed the frozen Danube into Bulgaria. Their country had already been divided into four revolutionary areas. There the Apostles and their helpers were to contact the local committees, gather together their members, and determine when and how the rebellion was to take place.

For a whole four months, feverish preparations took place in the revolutionary areas. The people manufactured cartridges, weapons other than firearms,

even made wooden cannon, obtained supplies of firearms, prepared and concealed supplies of food for the rebels and chose assembly and defence points. For those four months, these activities, in which tens of thousands of people took part, remained a secret. This fact alone is proof of the Bulgarians' single-mindedness and desperate resolve to fight for their liberation. Bulgaria's great writer Ivan Vazov defined the ferment preceding the April Uprising in his country as 'The Intoxication of a People'. There was something magnificent and heroic, moving and naïve in the 'intoxication' of the Bulgarian national revolution.

People from all parts of Bulgaria put money and effort into this work to such an extent that the episodes of January to April 1876 would have filled a great epic. The Plovdiv district, with Panagyurishtë as its centre emerged as the best-prepared. G. Benkovski particularly exerted a great deal of influence there; he was an original revolutionary with a strong political sense and great personal charm. On April 14th, 1876, 57 representatives of the district revolutionary committees gathered in order to evaluate their work and to take the vital decision. This secret gathering in the forest was the First Bulgarian National Assembly.

One of the 57 took fright because his comrades had spoken of starting the uprising in a week's time, the 1st of May, and denounced the organization to the government. One of the Ottomans' first candidates for arrest was the leader of the Koprivshtitsa revolutionaries, Kableshev; he managed to hide and sent information to the neighbouring villages that the conspiracy had been revealed; he himself climbed

into the church belfry and rang the bells; the Bulgarian National Revolution had begun, the uprising which was to be known as the April Uprising, because it broke out on April 20th, was proclaimed.

The people of the Plovdiv district rose to arms for a few days only. 'Arms' is an exaggeration, because instead of guns, most of the rebels carried scythes, axes and knives. What was a retarded village rebellion, if we use the criterion not of ideology, but of the weapons concerned, rose in revolt against a regular army, well equipped with Krupp's guns.

The first days of the Uprising, however, were superb. The people drove the Ottoman administration and its leading figures from their villages, formed mounted bands, which carried out long sorties in order to incite the villages which were still peaceful, for lack of information, to rebellion. Dozens of Bulgarian villages on both sides of the Maritsa lowlands, rose. Between them lay the plain, with its roads and railways, its enemy garrisons, and the troops which had been amassed against Bosnia, Herzegovina and Serbia, and the Bulgarians north of the Balkan Range were only to learn on April 28th that the Plovdiv district was already at war, and were to rise when it was falling in flames and blood.

The April Uprising in Sredna Gora made a great and tragic epic. The rebels were swiftly driven on the defensive because of poor communications and insufficient arms. They evacuated the women and children to the forests and set fire to their own homes, as if to destroy all chances of conciliation, and hurled themselves into desperate battles. Their only solution — and no one had any doubts at all about that —

was an honourable death. Each one of these thousands of peasants and craftsmen accepted it without a murmur. They defended their positions to the last, and the regular troops entered the villages of Sredna Gora only over the dead bodies of the last of them.

At the same time, the villages on the opposite side in the Rhodopes were also fighting hopelessly. Their position was even worse because the authorities left them to the vengeance of the neighbouring Mohammedan villages. The extreme hatred, which existed between these villages of different faiths, exploded into incredible atrocities. In Peroushtitsa and Batak the entire Bulgarian population was driven into the churches and surrounded, and after a resistance which lasted many days, was massacred down to the last one. Children who had not even started to walk were beheaded. Then the victors, leaving thousands of unburied corpses out in the open, withdrew with a rich booty.

The picture in North Bulgaria, where many villages between Sevlievo and Gabrovo had risen, was no less horrible. Their defenders fought from vantage-points, but their chances of success against the cannon of the regular troops were negligible. One after the other they came under fire, and were turned into smouldering ruins. Their last defenders, united in a big band led by Bacho Kiro and Father Hariton barricaded themselves in the Dryanovo Monastery. For a day and a night, they drove off the attacks of a whole division, in an incredibly unequal battle which filled the monastery's charnel-house with hundreds of perforated, severed skulls.

The revolutionaries in Ghiurghiu, who had voted

for and directed the rebellion, heard of its tragic development. Botev, the poet and ideologist, could not stand on one side during his people's blackest hour. He gathered together a band of 120 Bulgarians and crossed the Danube on the 17th of May. During that day, the rebellion had already been crushed in all parts of Bulgaria, but Botev did not know this; he hoped to start an uprising in the Vratsa district, which had not risen because of the early arrest of its organizers.

For two days and nights — from the 17th to the 19th of May — the members of Botev's band unceasingly fought strong contingents of regular troops, and Circassian detachments which pursued them. Their aim was to reach the Balkan Range and to head South-Eastwards for the Plovdiv district along its ridges. On the evening of the 19th, however, Botev was killed by a stray bullet. The members of his band, who had learnt that the uprising had come to an end, scattered.

Thus finished the epic of April.

In fact it was also a beginning. The Ottoman authorities had dealt with the rebellious Bulgarians in a way reminiscent of the mediaeval period. Its one and only method of governing subject peoples had not changed — the same massacres of peaceful populations, the same burning of whole towns and villages, even the same caravans of slaves, for Bulgarians were really sold in Adrianople, Istanbul and the cities of Asia Minor. It was exactly this extreme cruelty and extreme ruthlessness of a barbaric power which aroused the indignation of world opinion.

Prominent politicians, writers and scholars made

representations on behalf of the Bulgarians. Already it was not a Bulgarian but a European question: Would Europe tolerate mediaeval savagery in its midst? Foreign correspondents and missions set off all over Bulgaria and the Ottoman authorities made vain attempts to bury the thousands of rotting corpses; but there were just not enough people to do this. The centuries of inhuman suffering were revealed to Europe. The desperate self-sacrifice of thousands of Bulgarians found its justification -- the world's conscience was awakened.

Under the pressure of social forces, and finally under that of Russian diplomacy at Istanbul, a conference was called. The Russians knew that diplomatic means could not be relied upon, and gave military aid to Serbia and Montenegro so that they could wage war on the Sublime Porte, and the Emperor Alexander II declared that Russia would use force to guarantee Bulgaria's autonomy if this could not be achieved by peaceful means.

Of course, the Istanbul conference concluded with vague promises for the reform of the Empire, and for the improvement of conditions for the Christian population. The Western powers hoped that Russia would give way before their united resistance and that the situation in Bulgaria would remain unchanged. However, Russia's whole prestige was at stake. Between the 12th and the 24th of April, 1877, exactly a year after the April Uprising, she declared war on the Ottoman Empire.

England and Austro-Hungary immediately threatened to intervene on the Empire's side, while Rumania not only allowed Russian troops to pass through,

but itself declared war on the Ottomans in order to guarantee its own independence completely. Thousands of Bulgarian emigrés headed towards Kishinev in Bessarabia. There they were to form separate battalions under Russian command and take part in the liberation of their country. Bulgaria's weapon was volunteer troops who followed in the revolutionary tradition of April 1876.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877/78 progressed unevenly. It is pointed out as an example of many strategic and tactical errors on the part of both Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Prominent Russian military leaders, such as Skobelev, Gurko and Totleben, were placed under the command of Prince Nikolai Nikolaevich, a self-confident, irresponsible and incompetent person. For this reason, the Russians suffered huge casualties in a long and undistinguished campaign; several times it seemed as if they would lose the war. The fact that they won was not merely due to the reason that the Ottomans also had impermissible weaknesses in their command. The main reason was the incredible enthusiasm of the Russian troops.

There was something quite foreign to military affairs, politics and diplomacy in the tense months of 1877/78 among the Russian troops. News of Bulgarian sufferings, of their desperate situation had reached Russia. The people and intelligentsia simply forced the Tsar to wage a war, the outcome of which was vague, because of the open hostility of Austria and England. These same activists were now soldiers and they fought fiercely for the liberation of their suffering Slav brothers. For them, neither obstacles nor danger

existed, and there would be no retreat without final victory.

The mood of these liberators was strengthened by the Bulgarian people. In every place where the Russians set foot, the Bulgarians wholeheartedly placed themselves under their command.

Their intelligence, suppliers and nurses worked wonders for the great cause. The Bulgarian soldiers — those few thousand volunteers who had had no systematic military training — threw themselves into the fiercest battles with the confidence of avengers and performed feats of pure heroism. It is sufficient to mention four names in the history of the war of liberation — those of Stara Zagora, Shipka, Pleven and Sheinovo — in order to place it among the wars that have played a significant part in the life of the Balkans. Even one is sufficient — that of Shipka, the pass in the Balkan Range, where these soldiers, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Russians, withstood the colossal pressure of the thousands-strong Ottoman army — for it to be known that this time as well, one year after Peroushtitsa and Batak, the Bulgarians had again paid for their freedom.

The forced winter marches through the Balkan Range and the fall of Pleven, which was defended by a garrison a thousand strong, decided the outcome of the war. At the beginning of January, the Russian troops made big advances to the South — Istanbul itself was threatened. Then the hostility of Austria and England turned into actual military preparations and this forced Russia to come to terms with the Sublime Porte, and afterwards to sign the Peace Treaty of the 3rd March, 1878, which Bulgaria celebrates as the Day

of her Liberation. The treaty, concluded in San Stefano, defined the borders of Bulgaria, a national aim for which Bulgaria exhaustively strove throughout each of the following Balkan wars; for these borders, which had taken into consideration Bulgaria's ethnic composition, were in existence a bare three months. The Western Powers feared that a great Slav state in the Balkans would always gravitate towards Russia and did everything possible to carve her up.

At the Berlin Congress of June-July, 1878, they laid down their conditions. All that was to remain of Bulgaria as a principality were the lands in the North-West and the Sofia area. The Maritsa plain and a small part of the Rhodopes were annexed to Eastern Roumelia, an autonomous area which was dependent on the Sublime Porte. The South-western areas of Bulgaria (according to the San-Stefano Treaty), were returned to the Ottoman government.

The decisions of the Berlin Congress were a severe blow to the newly-resurrected freedom of the Bulgarians. A nation-wide movement sprang up to oppose these decisions, the high-point of which was the Kresna Uprising of 1878. The Macedonian Bulgarians, who had again been severed from their motherland and cast into a new bondage, expressed their desperation in open rebellion.

A STATE REBORN MAKES ITS WAY

The Berlin Congress set a time-limit of a bare 9 months for temporary Russian rule of a liberated Bulgaria. Its first institutions were defined in the most general terms and a Constituent Assembly was called in Turnovo (February-April, 1879) with the task of drafting the Bulgarian constitution.

This was liberated Bulgaria's first broad political forum. Representatives of all classes of society assembled in Turnovo, from big landowners to those revolutionaries who had survived the uprisings and the war. The world had not expected that the Bulgarians, who had lived 500 years in bondage, would succeed in creating their own society, social trends and political maturity in their leaders. The hopes of the temporary Russian Tsarist government that the Constituent Assembly would merely confirm the plans put forward were not realized. The Assembly debated the future constitution long and heatedly: the 'younger' group from the pre-revolutionary period were victorious, and the Turnovo Constitution, adopt-

ed in 1879, is one of the most liberal of its time. The same Assembly chose a German, Alexander Battenberg, as Prince of Bulgaria. The temporary Russian administration withdrew.

The independent development of a resurrected Bulgaria commenced. The process of ferment, the differentiation of social forces and their polarization was to continue for many years. The country's economic development was to encourage the growth of the bourgeoisie, the ruin of the small landowner and the generation of a proletariat. The Bulgarian bourgeoisie, in order to make up for lost time, greedily made use of the state, and thus gained stature. These processes were to be reflected in the formation of political parties and the fierce struggle between them; they were to lead to a whole series of cataclysms in internal and foreign politics. For a short period, Bulgaria, which had commenced its bourgeois development at a late stage, was to follow in the historical footsteps of every bourgeois society.

Two main parties were formed almost immediately after the liberation — Conservative and Liberal. Strange as it may seem, the struggle between them was to be waged about the newly-born Turnovo Constitution. Conservative forces in Bulgaria, headed by the Prince, would not accept its extremely liberal character and made every attempt to change or suspend it. They relied in these attempts on the *haute* bourgeoisie, and on external forces; those of the Hapsburgs — Austro-Hungary — and of Tsarist Russia. The Liberals, who expressed the interests of the ordinary people and the small landowner who was being ruined, defended the Constitution in many clashes.

There were many episodes in this battle between the forces of society — short-lived or more lasting victories for one party or the other. In 1881, with Russian aid, Alexander Battenberg suspended the Constitution, but did not succeed in imposing his personal dictatorship because this brought him into conflict with the governments he had nominated.

The year 1885 brought with it events which affected the whole internal and foreign policy of Bulgaria. Eastern Roumelia — that part of Bulgaria which had been declared a vassal state of the Sublime Porte by the Berlin Congress — was swept by a widespread demand for union with Bulgaria. It was as if this was the natural continuation of the National Revolution — those who took part in it were revolutionaries who had survived the April Uprising.

The Union, which took place in an unparalleled upsurge of national feeling on the 6th of September 1886, was realized without the knowledge of Prince Battenberg, and without the consent of Russia whose interests would be threatened by any new complications in the Balkans. The Bulgarians had taken this step entirely at their own risk because it did not have the support of any one of the Great Powers. They mostly expected a Turko-Bulgarian war, for the Sublime Porte was the lawful suzerain of Eastern Roumelia. The blow, however, came from the West. The Serbian King Milan, displeased by the expansion of his Eastern neighbour, and prompted by Austro-Hungary, invaded Bulgaria, considering that the whole Bulgarian army was engaged on the Turkish front.

Bulgaria's position was exceptionally difficult. The

Russian Emperor, displeased with the development of Bulgaria's internal affairs, had withdrawn his military instructors. Only a few years after their liberation, Bulgaria had at her disposal only a few captains and one major— this was her command. However, in a forced march the whole army crossed from the Turkish front to the Western part of the country in two days and nights, where the Serbian troops had already been held back by frontier detachments. The decisive battle took place at Slivnitsa — in the low hills only 40 km from Sofia, the capital. The Serbs were defeated and Bulgarian troops pursued them as far as Pirot. These victories, if they had not provoked the decisive intervention of Austro-Hungary, who threatened to make war on Bulgaria, placed Serbia in a critical position. This war, which was unpopular among the Serbian people and unwanted by their troops, marked the beginning of an amazing practice, in which Balkan peoples attacked one another to serve foreign interests. The Great Powers already knew that they could find obedient stooges in the Balkan countries.

The Unification, and the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885 demonstrated the great strength of the Bulgarian people, and their firm resolution to pursue their national unification on their own. However, the Bulgarians' clear intention not to accommodate themselves to the interests of the Great Powers met with opposition. The Emperor Alexander III, supported by the most reactionary elements in Russia, caused a great deterioration in Russo-Bulgarian relations. His policy met with the approval of England and

Austro-Hungary, who hoped to gain influence in Bulgarian affairs.

Prince Alexander of Battenberg who, during his short period of rule had succeeded in getting into conflict with the people and who had opposed the Constitution, was removed from the throne by a military coup in 1886. Russia's refusal to support his return to the throne forced him to abdicate. After the Regency, which lasted until July 1887, another German was chosen as Prince of Bulgaria — Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. This was a step which was to cost Bulgaria dearly. During the Regency and the first years of Ferdinand's rule, S. Stambolov emerged as a leading political figure in Bulgaria. The country's reorientation away from Russia towards Austro-Hungary is connected absolutely with his name. This did not happen without the opposition of the people, whose ties with their Russian liberators were particularly strong; but the interests of the growing bourgeoisie were closely bound up with Austrian policy, and by means of systematic terror, it stifled any manifestation of friendship with Russia in Bulgaria. Its tie with Austro-Hungary, and later with Germany, were to lead the Bulgarian people to a series of national disasters. Also, in spite of the fact that in 1894 Stambolov's repressive regime ended, the supremacy of the social forces that supported him — that of the *haute bourgeoisie* — remained in full command.

Bulgaria's further internal policy struggles, as far as the bourgeois parties were concerned, in fact represented clashes between cliques. The bourgeoisie was gravitating towards various West European states, depending on its various economic ties. In the final

count, the policies of these parties were identical — that of class oppression and of failure to conform with the interests of the people; but the Bulgarian people, faithful to their revolutionary tradition and in all their political maturity could not be isolated from public life. At an extremely early stage, workers in Bulgaria became conscious of their class interests, which were to bring into being a party of their own.

This was the Socialist Party, founded in 1891 by Dimitar Blagoev, who before that had also founded one of the first socialist groups in Russia (1883). On his return to his own country, Blagoev considered that its development, which was already progressing towards capitalism, would create prerequisites for a workers' movement, that in Bulgaria the contradictions between labour and capital would bring about a socialist revolution in the future.

The prestige that the Bulgarian social-democratic party won in a short time was the result not only of the shameless exploitation of the workers by the bourgeoisie, but also of the virile struggle of the handful of inspired socialists who, with an extreme degree of self-sacrifice, embraced a cause which for that period was not only dangerous, but seemed to some merely Utopian. The socialist party consolidated itself in the struggle with opportunist elements and bourgeois rule. It gave support to strikers, passed through the painful period of factionism, for here, as everywhere else, two schools of thought developed in its ranks — those of the Left and Right, the 'Narrow' and 'Broad' socialists, who in 1903 split into two separate parties. The party of the 'narrow' socialists, led by D. Blagoev, was to be the revolutionary van-

guard of the Bulgarian working class. With its implacable class attitudes towards all vital questions, its uncompromising activity in the National Assembly and outside it, the Bulgarian Marxists were to win recognition, and most important, trust. They were to achieve a high degree of authority in the international workers' movement. Perhaps only a small minority know that the Bulgarian socialists were some of the first in Europe who succeeded in establishing their own municipal administration — local 'communes'.

However, there was also a particularly large number of poor and middle peasants in Bulgaria after the Liberation. Bulgaria remained an agricultural country until the second half of the 20th century, but with one important difference: it was not large landowners who dominated here, the agrarian problem so characteristic of other countries, with the inevitable fierce struggle for the redistribution of land, did not exist. Bulgaria's agrarian reform had in fact taken place at the time of her liberation with the removal of the Ottoman settlers. Bulgaria's land was in truth fragmented, but at the same time it was carefully cultivated. The skill of her agricultural workers was known outside Bulgaria, all over the Balkans and in Central and Eastern Europe.

The problems of the Bulgarian village were specific, and several decades were to pass before a worker-peasant alliance was formed. The growth of the state, the collection of taxes in kind, which was a legacy from Ottoman times, provoked purely peasant rebellions in 1900. The Agrarian Party was also founded at the beginning of the century — the Bulgarian Agrarian

National Union (BZNS — Bulgarski Zemedelski Narodni Suyouz.) Its programme aimed at defending the interests of the small and middle farmer, but its leadership was under extremely complex influences. The Bulgarian peasantry was not yet conscious that differing class interests were taking shape in its midst.

Apart from all this, in Bulgarian society, already liberated and left to its own course of development, heterogeneous social forces were growing which found expression in heterogeneous political parties. Here the processes which took place were particularly swift and turbulent, and the conflicts particularly fierce. It was as if the Bulgarian people, deprived of a national existence for five centuries, were trying to catch up on the rest of the world, which had developed without hindrance throughout these years.

However, 'pure' phenomena, without any admixtures, are rarely observed in history. In the first decades of free life, Bulgaria was not allowed simply to carry through her own internal processes to a clear conclusion: these processes were influenced by many and extremely contradictory external forces — the Balkans became Europe's sorest spot; it was a place where no state had yet firmly established its ethnic boundaries, where the Ottoman Empire still held a large part of the Christian population in bondage, a place which was in a permanent ferment of liberation. The fight for its liberation was not now a question of revolutionary acts; the policies of those Balkan peoples, who had already been liberated, began to play a part — and not only their policies. The Great Powers, which had intervened in this process, were to attempt to establish a permanent influence

over the Balkans, taking advantage of their ties with the local bourgeoisie. This game did not take into account the interests of the inhabitants — free or subject — but only their own supremacy. Here they established their spheres of influence, brought pressure to bear on certain bourgeois parties, and thus divided and ruled. As a result of their policies, the Balkans were to become the powder keg of Europe — to become Balkanized. It should be remembered that as far as the 'Balkanization' of the Balkans was concerned, the least guilty were the Balkan peoples themselves.

THE WARS

The part of the Bulgarian population that had been returned to Ottoman bondage by the Berlin Congress had no intention whatever of abiding by the dictates of the Great Powers. It created its own revolutionary organization, which in many ways resembled the committees that had preceded the Liberation and began intensive preparations for an uprising.

The minor bourgeoisie and peasant masses of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia and Thrace fought for the abolition of Ottoman feudalism and national oppression. Their class interests, however, did not coincide with those of the big bourgeoisie, as they aimed at the creation of a democratic state structure. For this reason, the desire for autonomy expressed by Macedonia and Thrace was progressive, in that it meant the abolition of foreign feudal oppression, and that the democratic growth of society would be ensured — and neither the monarchy nor the big bourgeoisie wanted to grant this. There was a clash between Ferdinand and the various governments that

he had involved, and the VMORO (*Vutreshna Makedono-Odrinska Revolutsionna Organizatsia*), the Bulgarian revolutionary organization in Macedonia and Adrianople, which took a stand on a number of questions connected with social democracy.

The extreme self-sacrifice of the Salonika revolutionaries, the kidnapping of Miss Stone, who became the most ardent supporter of her kidnappers' cause, drew the attention of the world to the struggles of the Bulgarians who remained under Ottoman rule. The climax of their revolutionary activities was the Ilinden and Preobrazhenski uprisings of 1903. They broke out at an extremely unfortunate political moment, without the support of any of the Great Powers, and were doomed to be crushed. This, however, did not prevent the Bulgarians of Thrace and Macedonia from displaying zeal and self-dedication, and from liberating many villages for a period of weeks. A republic was proclaimed in the town of Kroushevo and this was greeted ecstatically even by the local Turkish population. As far as their scale and number of casualties were concerned, these uprisings can be compared only with the April Uprising, of 1876 for Abdul Hamid's government, unhindered by anyone, sent a huge military force to deal with them and they were crushed with much bloodshed. Tens of thousands of Bulgarian families from Thrace and Macedonia emigrated to the free parts of Bulgaria.

The Macedonian liberation movement continued to seek new means of action. Taking a stand for the reorganization of the whole Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarian left-wing activists of the national liberation movement deserve general recognition as the

most dedicated fighters against the Sultan's despotic regime. The weakness of the Young Turks and the reluctance on the part of the bourgeois spirit of the new Ottoman ruling class to renounce this reactionary course of action frustrated attempts at a democratic solution of the national question within the Empire.

Bulgaria's international and internal situation at that time was grave. Ferdinand, who had proclaimed himself Tsar in 1908, imposed his personal dictatorship to a still greater degree. The bourgeois parties, which were involved in struggles between cliques and served by foreign interests for their own profit did not offer any resistance. Because of this, the influence of the revolutionary socialists who had gained supremacy over opportunist elements in the workers' movement was also growing. They also made their mark upon the Macedonian revolutionary organization by influencing its prominent socialist activists. The attempt of the Second International to reconcile the Bulgarian Workers' Social-Democratic Party — the left-wing 'Narrow' socialists — with opportunism, to force it to unite with the right-wing 'broad' socialists in Bulgaria met with failure. Bulgarian revolutionary social democracy remained consistently Marxist in the face of events which were to shake the whole of Europe.

They began with the Balkan War of 1912. At that time the two main camps in the future conflict had already been formed — the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. The Entente aimed at winning the Balkans and at erecting a barrier between Germany and Turkey. Also, it was favourably disposed to the Balkan states' intentions to win back their oppressed lands

by means of a joint war. The 'Balkan Alliance', of which Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro were members, was created with the assistance of Russian diplomacy. Its short duration and its internal contradictions became apparent even before the war, because its clauses, both published and secret, did not fully deal with the partitioning of the Turkish European provinces.

In spite of all this, on the 18th of October, 1912, the Balkan allies declared war on Turkey. The most important front in this war — that of Eastern Thrace — where there were also the greatest enemy concentrations, fell to the Bulgarians. However, the Bulgarian troops, forcing the Turkish army to flee, won such swift and decisive victories that before even a month had elapsed after the declaration of the war, on the 11th of November, the Turkish command asked for an armistice. Blinded by the victories of the Bulgarian army, Ferdinand refused. He dreamed of entering Istanbul; the Central Powers advised him secretly in connection with this. Their aim was obvious — they wished by all possible means to undermine the Balkan Union from inside.

The second stage of the war — the great Turkish counter-advance — passed with no less glory to the Bulgarian army. The Turkish troops were repulsed at all points, and on March 23rd 1913, the Bulgarians won a victory that no contemporary military expert had expected — they captured Adrianople. Thus, because of her failures and the danger which threatened Istanbul, Turkey was again forced to ask for an armistice.

This was concluded in London on May 30th —

1913, and according to its terms, Turkey renounced all her possessions west of the Enos-Midia line. Their partition was to take place according to the conditions laid down in the treaty between the Balkan states. Here, however, all the Allies' subversive activities came to light — practically none of the countries concerned wished to comply with the treaties; each put forward his own additional territorial claims. In fact it was the Central Powers, in whose interests it was that the Balkan alliance should disintegrate, who were behind this lack of agreement. Bulgaria, who had won the greatest victories in the War was quite exhausted, and perhaps because of this, the remaining allies united against her. Rumania also allied herself to them, and Bulgaria, instead of being in the Alliance, found herself surrounded by enemies.

Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, instead of recognising the disadvantageous position of his country, began open preparations for war to the West and the South. In spite of the warnings from Russian diplomats, on June 29th 1913, he and his obedient stooges, without further formalities declared war on Serbia and Greece, and military actions commenced.

This criminal adventure was at complete variance with Bulgaria's national interests. The Bulgarians were heavily defeated, as they were under pressure from all sides — for Rumanian troops invaded North Bulgaria, also without any formalities. Turkey, too, became involved in the war and took back the lands she had renounced in the London Treaty. A peace treaty was concluded two months later in Bucharest according to which the Allies would take all the land, to which they laid claim. The liberated territories with

a Bulgarian population were lost, Bulgarian blood had been shed in vain; relationships in the framework of which a peaceful solution to the Balkan problems should have been sought were utterly destroyed. Bulgaria, cruelly plundered, with large tracts of land populated by its own people torn away, was thrown into the orbit of the Central Powers. The foundations for the further 'Balkanization' of the Balkans had been laid.

This was how, out of the two possible ways of solving the contradictions between the Balkan states — war or mutual agreement — the former was chosen. The weakness of the social-democratic parties in the Balkan countries (with the exception of the Bulgarian, which was extremely influential), the smallness of the working class, the illiteracy and dispersed state of the peasant masses who most easily became a prey to chauvinism were all obstacles to the democratic solution of the complex problems of the Balkans. In all fairness, however, we must add that even when the petit-bourgeois nationalist element began to influence various strata of society in the Balkan countries, the progressive element raised its voice against the policies pursued by them, and the tie between democratic movements was not broken. Bulgarian revolutionary social democracy decisively fought for the strengthening of Balkan friendship and solidarity. It drew up a complete programme for the solution of national and other contradictions in the Balkans through the creation of a Balkan democratic federal republic. The BRSDR (Left-wing socialists) became one of the initiators of Balkan conferences, which opposed the militarist and aggressive aims of the bour-

geoisie and the monarchies in the various Balkan countries. They issued warnings about the fatal consequences of military adventures. One of the small number of social democratic parties, which remained faithful to the positions of internationalism on the eve of the First World War and while it was in progress, was that of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Socialists.

The contradictions between the Balkan states were irreconcilable, and made themselves felt with full force during the years that followed.

In 1914, taking advantage of the first motive — the assassination at Sarajevo — the Central Powers declared war on Serbia, which immediately became a conflict between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. The European War began first followed by the First World War. It found Bulgaria economically ruined, having lost territory in the two wars that she had just fought and confined within close borders. However, the struggle between the nations of Europe, which were involved in various combinations, and subject to complex interests was not to pass Bulgaria by.

This small nation, situated in a strategic position received propositions to participate from both sides, and promises of territorial compensation; considerable pressure was exerted by both sides. Tsar Ferdinand, supported by the Pro-German bourgeoisie resolved the dilemma to the advantage of the Central Powers. This disastrous policy relied on a desire for revenge on the part of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie, which had just suffered extreme disillusionment in its national aspirations.

According to the military plans of the Alliance command, to whom the Bulgarian army was subordi-

nated, it (the army) had to defend the whole Balkan front against Serbia, later against Greece, then against Rumania, and finally against the vast armies of the Entente, which attacked the Salonika sector. Thus, for two years — 1915/6, Bulgaria yet again fought on all fronts. Besides this, Germany herself plundered the Bulgarian economy and relied on this small but industrious country.

If the Balkan war had led to terrible consequences for Bulgaria because of the destruction of all hopes of unification, and the misguided enthusiasm of a whole people, then the First World War was, for the Bulgarians, to turn into a long, unbearable disaster that had no issue. Ragged and underfed, strung out on a front from the river Seret in Rumania to the river Vardar, for a whole two years, the Bulgarian army continued to give proof of its high morale. However, it soon became clear to every Bulgarian that he was shedding his blood for aims which were foreign to the interests of the people, for German imperialism. The German command forcibly checked the impetus of the Bulgarian advance to the South and West in order not to permit the full liquidation of these theatres of war, and to draw as many of the Entente's troops as possible into this area; the Germans, even during the war, raised the question of a condominium in Dobrudja, where the Bulgarian state was first founded; they made simultaneous promises to Bulgaria and Turkey of districts West of the Enos-Midia line. They mercilessly plundered Bulgaria, and in this way pinned down its troops in hunger and cold against the constantly-growing forces of the Entente. For Germany, which had also thrown itself into a military adventure

without perspective on many fronts, Bulgaria was the pawn to be sacrificed, which would save the Central Powers time, money and blood.

Such a game was not too difficult to see through. The Bulgarians understood that in this war also, the slogan of their national ideals was being used for purely mercenary ends, quite at variance with fundamental Bulgarian interests. The Bulgarian socialists explained this to the people with their many appeals, their entire agitation, anti-war activities and drive for understanding between the Balkan peoples. The BZNS (Agrarian Party), whose leader Alexander Stamboliyski and Raiko Daskalov Ferdinand had hastened to imprison also waged such a struggle, which, although more vacillating and inconsistent, was supported by the deep discontent of the soldier-peasant. Many other revolutionary social democrats were also imprisoned.

In spite of the unrest, in spite of their disillusionment, the Bulgarian troops defended the fronts until 1917. The October Revolution had broken out in Russia, against which Ferdinand had sent troops, but he had not succeeded in destroying her aureole as the liberator of his people. The effects of this event, which marked the beginning of the newest period in the history of mankind, were so marked among the Bulgarians that it threw the bourgeoisie into a panic. The government greeted the many mutinies, fraternizing on the fronts, desertion and demonstrations with increased repression — hundreds of half-naked soldiers were shot for insubordination. Ferdinand unequivocally warned his allies that if they did not send him German reinforcements, he could not be

held responsible for the future of the Balkan fronts. Germany, however, was no longer in a position to set aside forces for the strengthening of her position in the Balkans — her own position was sufficiently critical. More than ever before, the Bulgarians were forced to defend themselves against the inexorable force of thousands of fresh enemy troops.

The bourgeoisie, with the Tsar at its head had forebodings of its own downfall. It made attempts to postpone this by changing the government; in place of Radoslavov, the obvious German stooge, came the cabinet of Malinov and Kostourkov — a coalition of Democrats and Radicals — but it could find no solution to the problem. This still further aggravated relationships between the government and the opposition parties, whose membership was varied, ranging from consistently revolutionary Marxists to Pro-Entente big bourgeois groupings. Thus while political forces were re-grouping themselves in Bulgaria, while they were seeking various solutions to the deadlock, events began on the front which were to hasten the denouement.

On September 18th, 1918, the Bulgarian front at Dobro Polè was broken through. The huge number of fresh reservists accumulated by the Entente at Salonika, the unprecedented artillery preparation for the offensive had broken through the Bulgarian defence. A hail of gunfire poured down upon the thin, completely exhausted line of Bulgarians. The Bulgarian army withdrew from Dobro Polè and rapidly retreated to the country's old frontiers. As it soon became obvious, it was not only a question of the exhaustion of the Bulgarian forces. They raised slogans accusing

their rulers of responsibility for the war, raised demands for a republic and peoples' rule and then, turning on their own criminal government, headed towards Sofia.

The soldiers' mutiny of 1918 was a reflection of feelings which had long been growing among the Bulgarian people. The short-sighted policy of the haute bourgeoisie, the reckless adherence of the German Tsar to interests which were foreign to his nation were all condemned by the people with the mutiny.

The military republic which had been proclaimed was in existence for barely four days — (The Radomir Republic — September 26th-30th). The bourgeoisie marshalled its forces, and taking advantage of the inept command of the uprising, brutally crushed it with its élite cadres — only two hours' journey from the capital. This distance was too small for there to be room for any more illusions — the Bulgarian bourgeoisie realized that it had lost the battle. The example of Russia had filled it with mortal terror. It became involved in political machinations in order to gain time and in order to find a new demagogic line and a reliable internal ally. While a delegation set off for Salonika to arrange an armistice with the Entente, Ferdinand was forced to abdicate. His son Boris III succeeded him.

It was not too late for demagogy — the Bulgarian people were driven to despair. The armistice, which forced Bulgaria to tolerate the Entente's occupation forces on its territory did not do anything to lessen the crisis — both economic and political — in the country. A large number of mass strikes broke out in the mines, factories and among civil servants. Not only the Bul-

garian bourgeoisie was responsible for crushing them: the occupiers of the Entente, frightened by the development of the Revolution in Russia, aided the Bulgarian police.

The various party machinations followed one after the other — no party was able to stem the flow of the revolutionary crisis. The bourgeoisie, under pressure from the masses, agreed to allow the BZNS to form a cabinet. In this way, it chose the lesser evil, for it was threatened by the growing influence of Bulgarian revolutionary social democracy. Also, in March 1919, the BRSDP (Left-wing socialists) had become a founder of the Third International, and as a communist party, was a still greater danger to bourgeois rule in Bulgaria. It took an active part in the organization and direction of the great transport strike which followed the big political demonstrations and the many separate strikes which took place towards the end of 1919. The transport strike, which continued for two months paralysed the country's whole transport system. The fact that its repression was the work of the coalition government led by Stamboliyski, and which included the social democrats gave rise to the disagreement between the BCP and the BZNS that the bourgeoisie wanted. Its intrigues, which were aided by the external and internal situation met with success — in that it succeeded in setting the two main progressive forces against one another, and for a certain time frustrated the alliance of the strongest parties — that of the workers and that of the peasants.

The period from 1919 to 1923 was in fact one of agrarian rule in Bulgaria. This is the only case to be

found in Europe, in which an agrarian party has been in power, in the full sense of the word, and not merely an agrarian camouflage for a handful of political demagogues. As a political movement, the BZNS was contradictory and non-homogeneous in essence because both landless and minor agricultural producers and stallholders — middle peasants and big land-owners participated in it — from hired workers to those who exploited hired labour. Although the BZNS aimed at expressing the interests most of all of the average peasant, its policy could not but be inconsistent because it used a fluctuating criterion — that of class. The vague social outlook and policies of the BZNS won it enemies on two sides; the bourgeoisie and the exploited elements in town and village, who in political life completely lived by class principles which were expressed in their parties. Thus, the bourgeoisie in opposition continued to give support to its many political groupings while the proletariat, from both town and village, grouped itself to an even greater extent around the BCP. The BZNS gradually isolated itself from being the natural ally of the impoverished villagers and the peasant workers, leaving the bourgeoisie time to prepare its own striking-forces for attack.

During the time of its independent rule (1920-1923), the BZNS introduced a series of laws of wide social significance, the aim of which was to satisfy the interests of the petite bourgeoisie in Bulgaria — the middle peasant and smallholders. The prosecution of those responsible for the second national disaster was voted, land reforms which limited landowning on a large scale were introduced. A state consortium for

trade in cereal foods was created, an attempt was made at nationalizing property unlawfully acquired, capital gains taxes were raised several times over, and labour conscription was established.

All these things were blows — although not mortal ones — at the economic and political supremacy of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. They affected it to such an extent that it was compelled to forget its factional disputes and unite against its enemy. On the other hand, however, Stamboliyski had a negative attitude towards the demands and actions of the proletariat, led by the BCP. The Communists' significant election gains aggravated this; Stamboliyski waged an open war on the Bulgarian Communists. Deprived of both internal and external allies, 'peasant' power in Bulgaria groped blindly against a greater danger — the appearance of fascism in Europe.

THE LAST STRUGGLE

The history of Bulgaria from the end of the First World War to the end of the Second — the period from 1918 to 1944, is a history of violent class struggles. With greater or lesser lulls, they more or less occupied the internal life of the Bulgarian state, which continued its natural course of bourgeois development. This was a period rich in heroism and tragedy — as if it were a continuation of that centuries-old tradition which did not permit the Bulgarians to tolerate foreign power and thrust them into a long and tense struggle, Levski's idea of a 'pure and sacred peoples' republic' was not realized through the Liberation. Headed by German monarchs, turned into an appendage of German militarism, Bulgaria was consecutively drawn into several military adventures. In sixty years of free development she had suffered two national disasters and was confronted with a third, she had lost a large amount of territory populated with Bulgarians, was forced to her knees by the victors of the First World War and burdened with huge reparations. In order

for the status quo imposed by the peace treaties to be preserved, Bulgaria was also politically isolated by means of regional pacts.

After the heavy casualties suffered — both human and material— Bulgaria recovered only with great difficulty in the post-war period. The political crisis was overcome by the combined forces of the bourgeoisie, and, consciously or unconsciously, of the BZNS and the right-wing socialists. A short lull ensued, during which the bourgeois groupings gathered forces for the establishment of their dictatorship. The rift between the Agrarians and the Communists provided a great opportunity for them, and towards the end of 1921, the bourgeoisie undertook its first fascist operations. Fascism, which had just been born in Italy, found a fertile soil among the reactionary Bulgarian officers and a section of the bourgeoisie. As in Italy, and later in Germany also, it was to take advantage of the vengeful moods in all strata of society, and the ever-growing fear of the success of the Communist movements, and was to be supported by the haute bourgeoisie.

In 1922, a serious reactionary opposition force — the War League—which was supported by the bourgeois political union — the Narodn Zgovor, (The National Union), began to oppose the Agrarian government. It made plans for a coup and marshalled its forces, relying on Wrangel's army (which had entered Bulgaria after its rout by the Red Army in Russia) and on Macedonian terrorist groups. The resistance, which was mostly public and organized mainly by the Communist Party averted the coup, but the War League was convinced that the BZNS would not be able to

oppose it with any significant degree of material strength. Not long after this, the bourgeoisie — represented by a union of its parties in the so-called Constitutional Block — made a fresh attempt at a coup which was also averted.

In the tense situation which accompanied the adoption of fascism by a part of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie, the Communists raised the question of a referendum to decide whether there should be a national trial of those guilty of the two national disasters. (That is, the Balkan War and the First World War.) The overwhelmingly large number of those who voted in favour — and these were the Agrarians and Communists — was the greatest moment in the growing co-operation between Bulgaria's organized workers and peasants; but it had not yet become a fighting unit and because of the negligence of the BZNS towards rising fascism, on the 9th of June, 1923, the War League, with the support of the haute bourgeoisie successfully carried out an armed coup. Alexander Stamboliyski, who at that time was in his native village, led the peasants of the Pazardjik area in opposition, but after their short-lived successes, he was captured and brutally murdered. A spontaneous uprising against fascist power which was ruthlessly crushed, swept the whole nation.

The BCP, which had issued many warnings to the Agrarian government about the planned coup was not less surprised at the easy success of the conspirators. It tried to find a solution to the situation, declaring its neutrality as far as the coup was concerned, considering it as 'a struggle between the town and peasant bourgeoisie'. However, it soon realized its mistake. The new government of the 'democratic'

Union established an open fascist reign of terror directed against all democratic forces — it was an open class offensive against the Bulgarian workers. It became obvious to the Agrarians, who were mercilessly persecuted by the Pact, and to the Communists that they had let the moment pass for resistance against the establishment of fascism, and that every new delay would only allow reactionary forces to consolidate themselves.

The Communist International, through its representative Vassil Kolarov, a prominent figure in the international workers' movement recommended an alliance between the Communists and the Agrarians and called them to an armed uprising against fascism. The Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, in its session of the 5th-7th August, 1923, accepted these criticisms and recommendations and decided to work for the organization of a large-scale anti-fascist uprising. Its foundation was a united front of workers and peasants who were equally threatened by the establishment of fascism in Bulgaria.

The fascist government, however, under the leadership of Alexander Tsankov, realised the turn that events were taking. On September 12th it carried out mass arrests of leading Communists. In spite of this, the Central Committee's decision was not changed. The already outlawed Vassil Kolarov and Georgi Dimitrov, aided by leaders of the party who had not yet been arrested chose the night of the 22nd-23rd September as the date of the uprising. Its aim was to topple Tsankov's usurper government and to found a workers' and peasants' government in Bulgaria.

In fact the September Uprising — the first or-

ganised anti-fascist uprising in the world began on the 14th of September in the Stara Zagora area. The rebels' successes were significant, but they barely held out until the 20th of September because they were quite isolated. In spite of the heavy defeat, the populations of Chirpan and Kazanluk rose, one after the other; the uprising swept Plovdiv, Sofia and Razlog, until the most massive revolutionary manifestation of 1923 took place — the Vratsa uprising. There it was extremely widespread and many thousands took part in it. In the centre of all this was the town of Ferdinand, which the rebels captured with arms. Detachments set off from there in order to drive the fascists from other nearby centres which had also risen in arms — Knezha, Oryahovo, Byala Slatina, Berkovitsa and Lom. The rebels' first failure was in Lom, where they fought a large garrison which they were unable to cope with. Other detachments advanced on the important railway junction at Boichinovtsi. The Septembrists also captured this station in a bloody battle. A large amount of North-West territory was already freed from fascist power.

Precisely because the uprising in other parts of Bulgaria was half-hearted, or had already been crushed the fascists concentrated a large military force against this liberated territory. The means of a regular modern army and those of rebel workers and peasants cannot be compared. By the 29th of September, the power of the workers and peasants was destroyed, while small detachments headed for the Yugoslav border.

A reign of terror began, unsurpassed from the time of the April Uprising. Thousands of Bulgarians were

brutally killed without trial, only on suspicion, or because of rebel sympathies. Whole villages were deserted, the prisons were full, and the white terror descended upon Bulgaria.

It enjoyed one other great day — that of April 1925, when leftist elements carried out an arbitrary act of terrorism. They placed a time-bomb in the Sofia's cathedral during the burial service of one of the Tsar's generals. Tsankov's government found an excuse to carry out mass arrests of all Communists and killed a large number of them. Unprecedented events took place — there were public executions, people were burned alive, and not only Communists, but many progressive activists, prominent poets and painters disappeared without a trace.

Fascism in Bulgaria celebrated a victory; but it was a Pyrrhic victory, for it had lost all material and political assets among the population. The Bulgarian people had once and for all said 'no' to fascist reality. They were many times to express their extreme hatred for the tyrannical regime that had been established during the long, dark years of fascism in Bulgaria. This uprising, the armed revolutionary struggle that followed and the large casualties, served to strengthen the Bulgarian peoples' revolutionary virtues and was a basis for the future victory over the criminal fascist government.

It was now necessary for them to marshal their forces, and to fight a battle which was no less heroic, but less obvious, for not only in Bulgaria, but in the whole of Europe, the revolutionary crises was at an ebb. Capitalism had entered a temporary phase of stabilization. The bourgeoisie, frightened by the many

acts of rebellion on the part of the workers after the war, opposed them with a militant regime of its own, fascism. In 1932 a fearful spectre reared its head over Europe — Nazism. The capitalist countries regarded its appearance with indifference, for Hitler was sure to serve their interests in the war against the Communist movement. One Bulgarian, Georgi Dimitrov, stood like a colossus against triumphant Nazism.

The Reichstag Fire Trial, framed by the nazis, by means of which they thought to open their offensive against the Communist Party and to repress all progressive forces in Germany turned into a public censure of Hitler himself. The international campaigns in the defence of Georgi Dimitrov, the heroic conduct of this son of the Bulgarian working class during the trial were a great manifestation of internationalism in the years when Nazism was rapidly gaining strength.

Fascism in Bulgaria went through stages of ebb and flow, but did not change in essence. The Democratic Union, which was extremely compromised because of its terrorist methods, was followed by the government of the National Block, which came to power in the name of a stabilization of Bulgaria's economic and foreign policy. This was the period of the general economic crisis which hit the country particularly hard because Bulgaria was ruined by the reparations and the post-war disturbances. In 1934, by means of a military coup, another group of officers in the War League and the political group Zveno took power. After considering the deadlock in which the bourgeois parties had already held Bulgaria for fifteen years after the end of the war, the mem-

bers of Zveno tried to reorientate her as far as foreign policy was concerned, and to extract her from the position of international isolation, but in their internal policy again had recourse to the methods of open dictatorship, the disbanding of political parties, trade union and youth organizations of every kind. The anti-monarchist tendencies of the War League cost it the irreconcilable hatred of the dynasty which, with skilful manoeuvres ousted the Zveno group. In 1935, Boris succeeded in establishing the basis of his personal dictatorship.

From that year onwards, the governments which were formed according to the dictates of the Palace no longer represented definite political parties. 'Non-political' politicians took part in them. In spite of the complex circumstances and internal and external pressures, the Palace succeeded in fully controlling the situation until 1944. Bulgaria was living beneath the banner of an open monarcho-fascist dictatorship.

At the same time Bulgaria had definitely orientated herself towards an already nazi Germany. Her economy was becoming ever more closely connected with that of Germany. She was becoming an agricultural appendage to Germany — a large part of Bulgaria's exports was being swallowed up by the German market.

Between the two world wars, in spite of the crisis and reparations, Bulgaria had developed a small industry. The greatest development took place in the textile industry. The food-processing industry developed, and tobacco-production became the backbone of Bulgaria's exports. Together with the mines and the banks this industry was the foundation of the

economic supremacy of the bourgeoisie. The rapid property differentiation which was stimulated by the Liberation of 1878 was then taking place at an increased rate in town and country. The number of those exploited in enterprises and factories had risen, and a strong, conscious working class had been formed, with its own class organizations and manifestations. Economic and political strikes of the Sliven textile workers, of the Plovdiv tobacco workers and the Pernik miners took place.

The Communist Party was able, in a comparatively short time, to recover from the severe blows it had received in the 1920s, and the inevitable deviations to the left and right after the battle, the terror in the country, whose edge was now directed against the united Communists and Agrarians of the united front, instead of producing the desired effect of destroying all opposition, did just the opposite; the Communists gained nation-wide authority as a result of their brave struggle. Was it not really a remarkable fact that many towns such as Varna consistently returned only Communists to Parliament, that in Sofia the capital, and the seat of the monarchy and the government, where the main political forces were concentrated, the Communists also won the municipal elections of 1932. Of course, the government hastened to annul them, and to remove embarrassing deputies, but someone quite different was the master of the nation's consciousness and affection. In the 1930s the Communist Party was the recognised defender of the interests of the masses and of most of the Bulgarian intelligentsia and expressed their views. Under its direction, a wide, national anti-fascist front was formed, in which, to-

gether with prominent members of the BZNS were included the social democrats and certain bourgeois-democratic political leaders. No other party or political movement could dispute, or even compare with the authority and trust that the Communists had; there were Communist lawyers, teachers, doctors, public figures and representatives of the arts. The Communist Party's wide basis in society proved to be of great significance not only to its own history, but also to the history of Bulgaria, as events were at hand in which the Communist Party was to play a leading part and was to lead the whole Bulgarian people.

The Second World War approached. As before, Bulgaria had to determine her position in this conflict fateful for Europe. The Soviet Union, with which the Bulgarian government had established diplomatic relations in 1934, offered Bulgaria a pact of friendship and mutual aid in 1940. The BCP, which was then outlawed roused great agitation among the people in favour of these propositions, for it was obvious that Bulgaria, behind its officially-proclaimed neutrality was secretly forming links with nazi Germany and her entry into the war on the side of the Tripartite Pact threatened to involve her in a third national disaster. Tsar Boris, however, did not pay any attention to the signatures of the several hundred thousand Bulgarians who wanted a pact with the Soviet Union. On the 1st of March, 1941, Premier Filov signed a treaty for the adherence of Bulgaria to the fascist bloc. Months before that, the German fifth column had penetrated into Bulgaria, because the Axis had no faith in its future allies.

Bulgaria was an ally of the Axis, her territory was used as a manoeuvring ground for the nazi invasion of the Balkans and the East, but this is only one side of the picture, which does not reveal Bulgaria's true position in the Second World War by a long way.

Even in March, nazi troops entered Bulgaria, in order to invade Yugoslavia and Greece. The whole history of the country that follows both differs from and resembles the history of countries directly occupied by the Germans. Here in truth they relied upon obedient local stooges. Through them, Germany extracted from Bulgaria the raw materials necessary for supplying its people, and kept the Bulgarian population under a reign of terror. Supported by the fascisized bourgeoisie, and economically bound up with Germany, the government of Filov, and later that of Bozhilov, pursued an anti-national policy. Its most implacable enemy was the Communist Party, which it fought with Gestapo methods. Emergency laws were in force in Bulgaria which handed over any person accused of political activities to military courts. Death sentences, imprisonment and concentration camps became quite common in Bulgaria after its entry into the fascist bloc.

Perhaps this sounds paradoxical for an ally, but such are the historical facts. Let us recall that as nationalist propaganda in the country rejoiced 'at last Bulgaria was united', the ruling fascists attributed to themselves the historical merit of having attained all this without heavy casualties. This subterfuge was skillfully used; with the aid of nazi Germany an injustice against the Bulgarians was righted. All sorts of arguments were used, historical, ideological, psy-

chological, and all this at a moment when Yugoslavia and Greece were laid low by the war and their countries were in ruins, and Rumania had also been forced to be a participant in the planned war in the East; when the fascist bloc was at the apotheosis of its power and marched victoriously all over Europe.

In spite of this, all the varied propaganda which tried to activate for its cause both the most arrogant and the most covert feelings and moods, did not succeed in influencing the Bulgarian people, or in changing its anti-war mood. What greater proof is there of the mood of a country than that the declaration of war against the Western Powers was described by the Bulgarian government as 'a symbolic war', as a forced concession to Germany without any obligations or consequences for Bulgaria? Is not the fact that the Bulgarian fascist government decided against declaring war on the USSR, and did not dare to send one soldier to the Eastern Front sufficient proof of the true wishes and aims of the Bulgarian people? A Soviet mission remained in Sofia throughout the whole war-time period. Also, the Minister of War handed in his resignation because of the openly-expressed will of the reservists that had been called up not to fight against the Soviet Union.

The Bulgarian Communists, true to their international duty, clearly and firmly declared that they condemned the policies that were being pursued and would seek out those responsible for them. The call for an energetic struggle to put an end to the war, the negative attitude of the Bulgarian people towards the nazi aggression in Yugoslavia and Greece, and to the use of Bulgarian troops for occupation is due to

their great work. Over the whole country, both orally and with thousands of leaflets, and also among the troops, it was demonstrated 'that the peoples against whom our army is being sent are not our enemies at all, but friends and brothers, some by blood, and others by their fate'. Thus the conditions for the expression of solidarity with the struggling Yugoslavs and Greeks and for the formation of a broad front of armed resistance in Bulgaria itself were prepared.

Thus began the Bulgarian peoples' resistance struggle in the Second World War in the name of its international duty to its neighbours and to more distant peoples, who were the victims of nazi aggression. It was organised by the BCP, which, with its whole moral authority opposed the nationalist and chauvinist element and declared its intention to prepare the Bulgarian people for an armed struggle. This was the last struggle — and it was to last a whole three and a half years.

The descendants of the fighters from the April and September Uprisings were taking part in the general anti-fascist movement. They formed partisan detachments and illegal fighting units. Their duty was to make attacks on nazi troop-trains, arsenals and food-depots intended for the Germans. Acting in exceptionally difficult circumstances — here the enemy was not so much the foreign occupiers as much as their own fascisized bourgeoisie with its own state mechanism — they faced countless dangers, provocations and persecutions. Large military forces were sent against the partisans in the mountains of Bulgaria and the underground workers in the villages: the villages were blockaded; the blockading of districts in the towns

became a common occurrence; every person who concealed outlaws was shot, together with his family, and his house was burnt down. Special detachments of military police — the Gendarmerie — which were especially brutal in carrying out repressive measures, were created to fight the resistance movement. These atrocities only deepened the split between the government and the people. Over 64,000 people were charged with taking part in conspiracies and sent to prison; 15,000 people were detained in concentration camps, and a further 10,000 sentenced to forced labour.

When in 1943, the Communist Party, through its illegal radio station 'Hristo Botev', announced the emergence of the Otechestven Front (Fatherland Front) — that massively organized political concentration of anti-fascist forces in Bulgaria — it was now not only Communists who were active in the ranks of the Bulgarian resistance. It made the union between workers and peasants a reality, welded together by decades of common struggle. In it the progressive Bulgarian intelligentsia found its place.

The fascist government's impotence in dealing with the ever-wider national protest, the economic ruin and the partisan movement were reflected in a more intense and ruthless reign of terror. The full evacuation of the capital, which had been heavily bombed by the British and the Americans, disrupted the life of the country. Boris III, who had called himself a 'unifier', because of the occupational duties in the Balkans that he had undertaken in the nazis' name, died in August, 1943. It was no secret any more that Germany looked upon the territories occupied by Bulgarian troops as German zones of influence, and had

openly threatened that 'the reckonings of the cautious will be shown to be false'. In spite of this, the regency which ruled Bulgaria after the death of Boris III continued to pursue his policy of an alliance with Germany.

One of the darkest passages in the history of the nazi regime in Europe was their inhuman treatment of the Jews. In 1943, the turn came of the Bulgarian Jews. They had long ago been isolated, banished to the provinces and economically stifled. The nazis, however, were even more insistant that they should be sent to death-camps. The Bulgarian fascist government secretly signed an agreement for the expulsion of 20,000 Jews — that is, about half the Jews living in Bulgaria. It was afraid, however, of the reaction in the country, and limited itself to the banishment of the Jews of the occupied territories. Eleven thousand people were quickly removed and sent to Germany. The crime was on too large a scale to remain concealed. The agitation which swept the country was such that even a group of deputies signed a petition which demanded that this atrocity should cease. The fascist government threatened punishment and gave orders for the remaining numbers to be completed, from the Jews in Bulgaria. At this terrible tragedy, the population's silent protest turned into a mighty action which involved all strata of society. The government was forced to reverse its fatal decision in order not to be toppled by the national indignation. In Europe during the years of the Second World War, only the Bulgarian Jews were saved, and that in a country which was an ally of nazi Germany.

The constant growth of the anti-fascist resistance in Bulgaria was strongly influenced by events on the

Eastern Front. The defeat of the German troops at Stalingrad aggravated the political crisis in the country. The anti-fascist forces were confronted with new tasks. Bulgaria was divided into twelve rebel zones of operation. About 20,000 partisans and 10,000 members of fighting groups were in action in various areas. More than 200,000 Bulgarian men and women were aiding the national army of liberation and fighting groups.

Bulgarian partisan groups were also formed on the territory of the struggling Yugoslavs and Greeks. At the end of 1943, the Hristo Botev Bulgarian battalion was formed in Yugoslavia, which, with the co-operation of the Greek population set out on a campaign towards Bulgaria, and shoulder to shoulder with Greek partisans, fought a series of battles with German and Bulgarian troops. Another partisan detachment, the Anton Popov, from Petrich crossed over into Greece, and together with Greek partisans, carried on military and political operations. The Bulgarian partisan detachment Vassil Levski and many others were active in the ranks of ELAS.

The Dimitar Blagoev detachment which consisted of Bulgarian volunteers who had until then fought in a Yugoslav partisan division was formed on Yugoslav territory. The G. Rakovski battalion was formed from Bulgarian soldiers who had gone over to the side of the Yugoslav partisans. In May, 1944, a whole section of a Bulgarian regiment joined the Yugoslav partisans and grew into a partisan brigade named after Georgi Dimitrov. It fought intensive battles against the Bulgarian fascist detachments.

These simultaneous operations, and the Bulgar-

ian people's whole-hearted struggle against fascism — both Bulgarian and foreign — laid a strong foundation for the development of brotherly co-operation between the Bulgarians and the peoples of Yugoslavia and Greece.

Thus in Bulgaria, the scope of the anti-fascist struggle prepared the international conditions for the people's democratic revolution. This took place on the 9th of September, 1944, after the planned actions of the armed groups and the Fatherland Front committees, and after the realization of several great political acts in the country's important centres. The enthusiasm which gripped the mass of the people was inspired by the victorious Soviet Army, which had reached the Bulgarian border. The newly-established peoples' government hastened to make its own contribution to the ending of the war. The reorganised Bulgarian army led attacks against the nazi troops in the Balkans, aiming for the total defeat of nazi Germany. In this war, the Bulgarians lost 30,000 precious lives. .

Yet one more dramatic period of Bulgaria's history had come to a close.

A FIRST BALANCE-SHEET

It was not just a change of political regime that took place on the 9th of September 1944. The foundations of a new social system were laid.

The balance-sheet of the internal and foreign policy activities of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie was negative, but this does not mean that the relative advance made in Bulgaria during the period of bourgeois rule should be denied; it was a step ahead in the field of economics, and particularly the great successes in some fields of public life such as education and public health care. There was a marked development in the national culture. We cannot but give an account of the role of the proletarian struggles and also of the strong traditions of the epoch of the national revolutionary war in these attainments.

However, the technical reorganization of industry and agriculture was very retarded and its results were negligible. Hidden unemployment was like a cancer which weakened the whole of society. The attempt to introduce a planned economy did not solve the con-

traditions and crises that had arisen. The opportunities afforded by the bourgeoisie to foreign capital led to economic instability and political dependence on external forces.

With such a balance-sheet the peoples' government began to construct the new model of social structure in Bulgaria.

Above all, the friendship and constructive attitude of the Soviet Union towards its people allowed Bulgaria to extricate herself from the position of international isolation and to join the general democratic front. The Bulgarian army, in spite of England's negative position, joined the allies in the war against nazi Germany. The people had finally expressed their true feelings, and at the price of a huge amount of political, military and economic effort won international trust and the right to decide its own fate.

The political consolidation of the popular democratic regime was realized in a fierce struggle with the fascist inheritance, the organs of terror were destroyed and the administrative apparatus purged. Partisans and volunteers joined the ranks of the army. A responsible peoples' court reviewed all war crimes.

All this was carried out as a result of legislature sanctioned by the Regency and supported by the Fatherland Front organs, which, however, did not become organs of government.

Structural economic changes took place when unlawfully and criminally-gained wealth was confiscated, and when German property in Bulgaria was handed over to the Soviet Union. A strong public sector was created which included public transport, the mines (most of which were owned by the state even

before the war), and large industrial and commercial enterprises.

The nationalization introduced in December, 1947 (of 6,100 enterprises) eliminated the power of capital in Bulgaria.

The most interesting phenomenon in Bulgaria's post-war conditions was the economic transformations associated with the petite bourgeoisie. In this classic country of small ownership, even after the agrarian reform (until 1947, the land was divided up between 130,000 families) there was no real improvement in the structure of the village. The only solution to this situation was shown to be the formation of co-operatives for small-scale agricultural production. This process of co-operating without expropriation was to become the bridge which was to lead Bulgarian agriculture to a new stage on the road to widespread prosperity.

The country reconstructed itself not without difficulties. Right-wing elements tried to save fascist criminals, seeking full rehabilitation for them if they took part in the war. Nation-wide protest prevented this attempt. Gradually an open opposition, which undertook a general attack on the people's democratic government and the Fatherland Front consolidated itself. The moment was well chosen. A section of the petite bourgeoisie had an undetermined attitude towards the government. Since certain limitations connected with the war had affected its interests. The BCP and the Fatherland Front had still not produced a satisfactory programme for them. The opposition movement grew mainly among the petite bourgeoisie.

In the Great National Assembly, summoned at the end of 1946, the Fatherland Front won an indisputable victory (71 per cent of the vote), but the opposition had also gained a significant percentage (29 per cent). The struggle was carried into parliament. After the vain attempt at obstruction by the opposition, the Great National Assembly voted for the new Constitution of Bulgaria. In the meantime, a peace treaty was signed (February, 1947). This, in general lines shows how the foundations of the political system of the people's democratic government in Bulgaria were laid.

People's democracy is a political system of the new society in constant evolution. For this reason, the Fifth Congress of the BCP gave a general outline for the building of a socialist society in Bulgaria. The magnificent progress of the construction of socialism began, a process which has filled the life of the nation from the Fifth Congress to the present day.

This was an epilogue which was in fact only a beginning.

The Bulgarian state had existed for thirteen centuries. Seven of them had been lived under foreign bondage and for the remaining six, the people had had to tolerate the arbitrariness of their own feudal rulers or capitalists, as in every society founded upon exploitation. Countless historical vicissitudes had brought Bulgaria, from being a great mediaeval power down to being an underdeveloped capitalist state. Through the first four decades of free development — from 1878 to 1918, Bulgaria lived through four wars from which she emerged devitalised, territorially deprived and discouraged. The September uprising, the

White Terror, fascism, the national resistance in the period of the Second World War — all of these were new wounds in the unhealed body of Bulgaria, they were blows which cost her best sons their lives. With such a heritage, Bulgaria entered the newest era of her development — the building of socialism. A tremendous vitality, inexhaustible energy and exertion of spiritual forces — these were the characteristics of the Bulgarian people which were demonstrated at the time of its National Revival and national revolution. In our time this has been confirmed by the latest, extremely rapid and convincing successes of Bulgarians in building their new life.

In 1944, Bulgaria was not only a country which was backward in its capitalist development — that would have been only half the trouble. However, it became apparent that she had been ruined by the economic plundering of nazi Germany, by the Anglo-American bombings of many of her towns, especially of her capital, by the exertions of the war against the nazis. In fact only a people, deeply decided after centuries of suffering to win prosperity and free development, could have attained that which the Bulgarians have in the short period of a quarter of a century.

Today Bulgaria is no longer an agricultural country. When we say this, it should at once be emphasized that the whole brilliant tradition of Bulgarian agriculture — especially as far as intensive cultures, horticulture and fruit-growing are concerned — received an exceptional stimulus and began to develop soundly at an increased rate precisely after the collectivization and mechanization of agriculture. All over Bulgaria, where thermal springs abound, where the sun shines

for at least half the winter hundreds of hectares of greenhouses now stand. Bulgaria exports early hot-house vegetables all over Europe. Huge stretches of vineyards, orchards and tobacco-plantations cover her land — fields stretch away unbroken by hedges. Hundreds of canning factories process the fruits of Bulgarian agriculture in order to supply far-off markets. This agriculture has preserved one quality even from the time of its pre-socialist development — the strong tie between the Bulgarian peasant and the land; the love and skill of the Bulgarian in the sphere of agriculture. The rest, however, the methods of this culture have radically changed; today's agriculture in Bulgaria is intensive, it makes use of the achievements of mechanization and artificial fertilization, of hothouses, and of the scientific organization of labour. Only in this way can we explain how Bulgaria, with its area of a little over 100,000 sq. kms produces such a huge quantity of canned fruit for the international market which is exported to dozens of countries.

Also, when we affirm that today Bulgaria is no longer an agricultural country, this does not mean at all that its agriculture has been replaced by industry — it is simply that industry has come to balance the economy. Bulgaria's late industrial development had one positive effect on life after 1944, new industry was equipped according to the latest technical requirements. It had inherited almost no machine stock from capitalism; here socialism right from the very beginning — in technology, in organization — had applied a purely scientific means of industrial development. Beginning from the insuring of a raw material basis — heavy and light metals,


chemicals, timber, oil, etc. and ending with machine-building, electrical appliances and engineering industries, oil derivatives, and textiles, etc., all this was planned, constructed, and put into operation only after 1944.

The first stage in the industrialization of socialist Bulgaria was devoted to heavy industry, so that the country's economy should not be dependent on the import of raw materials and agricultural machinery. During the following years, however, the development of light industry forged ahead, and registered significant successes. This perceptibly raised the country's standard of living.

The scale of building in Bulgaria is quite unprecedented — this is the first thing that makes an impression on foreign visitors; building is going on all over the country, which is covered with scaffolding, and brick buildings, still unfaced, number ten times more than those already finished. The physical image of the towns and villages has changed entirely — it seems as if this state, which has existed for more than a thousand years was born only yesterday, so modern are its streets and houses, even in remote villages. The Bulgarian's renowned thrift and passion for construction have only recently been given their head. Lack of conservatism, and Bulgarian enterprise allow him to master new methods of labour and ways of life quickly, and continually raise his living requirements. Today no Bulgarian worker or peasant could imagine living without the latest attainments of a modern way of life.

The attainments of the peoples' government are also considerable in another sphere, which Bulgarians

have always considered to be particularly important — in that of education and culture. Here tradition plays a big role. Just as during the National Revival when the Bulgarian people spared no effort, money, or even the sacrifice of their lives in order to supply themselves with their own schools, books, theatre and press, with the same degree of self-sacrifice today's Bulgarians gave concentration and effort for the building of their modern culture.

Besides in the capital, where about 100,000 students are studying, higher educational institutions also exist in many provincial towns. Each district centre has its own large library, theatre, and quite frequently, its own opera and philharmonic orchestra; there are not only libraries in every village, they are to be found at every factory, large and small. The relatively, large editions in which books are published cannot satisfy the continually growing interest in literature, periodicals and newspapers. 

This general interest in culture and education which is typical of Bulgaria can easily be demonstrated — there is not one illiterate person in the country today, and the number of those who have higher education, is, by ratio, the highest in the world.

There are also significant successes in another sphere — that of public health care and social security. There is no unemployment in Bulgaria. Everyone is entitled to free medical aid, an annual holiday, canteen meals and public-domestic services. Depending on the type of work, he may have as little as a five-hour working day and is entitled to be pensioned off at an earlier age.

All of this, the growth of living-standards, culture

public health care, social security — contributes to the making of a new image, a new spiritual quality, a new self-confidence. In twenty-five years, the Bulgarian worker has learned to forget that he was once exploited, threatened by unemployment and class injustice. Today he is a conscious constructor of a new life which is entirely his, and which will ensure the prosperity and cultural development of his children and grandchildren. The traditional image of the Bulgarian masses — a peasantry which laboured slavishly from dawn to dusk in order to exist — has been forgotten; today the demarcation in way of life and culture between town and village has been obliterated, for the Bulgarian peasant has access to the same social advantages as the townsman.

The wish of the People today is one and the same— to live in peace and understanding with other nations, and to continue the successful building of their new life. They stand behind their government and the Bulgarian Communist Party, which pursue a policy that will reflect the true interests of their people.

Artist: *Dimitar Kartalov*
Technical Editor: *Maria Shishmanova*
Proof-reader : *Mirka Ilieva*
Format 71/100/32; 10.50 Printer's Sheets
State Printing House — D. Blagoev

